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THE

FORTUNES OF GLENCORE.

BY

CHARLES LEVER.

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THE

FORTUNES OF GLENCORE.

CHAPTER I.

UPTONISM.

About noon on the following day, Sir Horace Upton and the Colonel drove up to the gate of the villa at Sorrento, and learned, to their no small astonishment, that the Princess had taken her departure that morning for Como. If Upton heard these tidings with a sense of pain, nothing in his manner betrayed the sentiment; on the contrary, he proceeded to do the honours of the place

like its owner. He showed Harcourt the grounds and the gardens, pointed out all the choice points of view, directed his attention to rare plants and curious animals; and then led him within doors to admire the objects of art and luxury which abounded there.

"And that, I conclude, is a portrait of the Princess," said Harcourt, as he stood before what had been a flattering likeness twenty years back.

"Yes, and a wonderful resemblance," said Upton, eyeing it through his glass. "Fatter and fuller now, perhaps; but it was done after an illness."

"By Jove!" muttered Harcourt, "she must be very beautiful; I don't think I ever saw a handsomer woman!"

"You are only repeating a European verdict. She is the most perfectly beautiful woman of the Continent."

"So there is no flattery in that picture?"

"Flattery! Why, my dear fellow, these people, the very cleverest of them, can't imagine anything as lovely as that. They can imitate—they never invent real beauty."

"And clever, you say, too?"

"'Esprit' enough for a dozen reviewers and fifty fashionable novelists." And as he spoke he smiled and coquetted with the portrait, as though to say, "Don't mind my saying all this to your face."

"I suppose her history is a very interesting one."

"Her history, my worthy Harcourt! She has a dozen histories. Such women have a life of politics, a life of literature, a life of the salons, a life of the affections, not to speak of the episodes of jealousy, ambition, triumph, and sometimes defeat, that make up the brilliant web of their existence. Some three or four such people give the whole character and tone to the age they live in. They mould its interests, sway its

fashions, suggest its tastes, and they finally rule those who fancy that they rule mankind."

"Egad, then, it makes one very sorry for poor mankind," muttered Harcourt, with a most honest sincerity of voice.

"Why should it do so, my good Harcourt? Is the refinement of a woman's intellect a worse guide than the coarser instincts of a man's nature? Would you not yourself rather trust your destinies to the fair creature yonder, than be left to the legislative mercies of that old gentleman there, Hardenberg; or his fellow on the other side, Metternich?"

"Grim-looking fellow the Prussian—the other is much better," said Harcourt, rather evading the question.

"I confess I prefer the Princess," said Upton, as he bowed before the portrait in deepest courtesy. "But here comes breakfast. I have ordered them to give it to us

here, that we may enjoy that glorious sea-view while we eat."

"I thought your cook a man of genius, Upton, but this fellow is his master," said Harcourt, as he tasted his soup.

"They are brothers—twins, too; and they have their separate gifts," said Upton, affectedly. "My fellow, they tell me, has the finer intelligence, but he plays deeply, speculates on the Bourse, and it spoils his nerve."

Harcourt watched the delivery of this speech to catch if there were any signs of raillery in the speaker; he felt that there was a kind of mockery in the words, but there was none in the manner, for there was not any in the mind of him who uttered them.

"My chef," resumed Upton, "is a great essayist, who must have time for his efforts. This fellow is a 'feuilleton writer,' who is required to be new and sparkling every day

of the year — always varied, never profound."

"And is this your life of every day?" said Harcourt, as he surveyed the splendid room, and carried his glance towards the terraced gardens that flanked the sea.

"Pretty much this kind of thing," sighed Upton, wearily.

"And no great hardship either, I should call it."

"No, certainly not," said the other, hesitatingly. "To one like myself, for instance, who has no health for the wear and tear of public life, and no heart for its ambitions, there is a great deal to like in the quiet retirement of a first-class mission."

"Is there really then nothing to do?" asked Harcourt, innocently.

"Nothing, if you don't make it for yourself. You can have a harvest if you like to sow. Otherwise, you may lie in fallow the year long. The subordinates take the petty

miseries of diplomacy for *their* share—the sorrows of insulted Englishmen, the passport difficulties, the custom-house troubles, the police insults. The Secretary calls at the offices of the Government, carries messages, and the answers; and *I*, when I have health for it, make my compliments to the King in a cocked-hat on his birthday, and have twelve grease-pots illuminated over my door to honour the same festival."

"And is that all?"

"Very nearly. In fact, when one does anything more, they generally do wrong; and by a steady persistence in this kind of thing for thirty years, you are called 'a safe man who never compromised his Government,' and are certain to be employed by any party in power."

"I begin to think I might be an envoy myself," said Harcourt.

"No doubt of it; we have two or three of your calibre in Germany this moment—

men liked and respected; and, what is of more consequence, well looked upon at 'the Office.'"

"I don't exactly follow you in that last remark."

"I scarcely expected you should; and as little can I make it clear to you. Know, however, that in that venerable pile in Downing-street, called the Foreign Office, there is a strange, mysterious sentiment, —partly tradition, partly prejudice, partly toadyism—which bands together all within its walls, from the whiskered porter at the door to the essenced minister in his bureau, into one intellectual conglomerate, that judges of every man in 'the Line'—as they call diplomacy—with one accord. By that curious tribunal, which hears no evidence, nor ever utters a sentence, each man's merits are weighed; and to stand well in the Office is better than all the favours of the Court, or the force of great abilities."

"But I cannot comprehend how mere subordinates, the underlings of official life, can possibly influence the fortunes of men so much above them."

"Picture to yourself the position of an humble guest at a great man's table; imagine one to whose pretensions the sentiments of the servants' hall are hostile; he is served to all appearance like the rest of the company; he gets his soup and his fish like those about him, and his wine-glass is duly replenished —yet what a series of petty mortifications is he the victim of; how constantly is he made to feel that he is not in public favour; how certain, too, if he incur an awkwardness, to find that his distresses are exposed. The servants' hall is the Office, my dear Harcourt, and its persecutions are equally polished."

"Are you a favourite there yourself?" asked the other, slyly.

"A prime favourite; they all like *me!*"

said he, throwing himself back in his chair, with an air of easy self-satisfaction; and Harcourt stared at him, curious to know whether so astute a man was the dupe of his own self-esteem, or merely amusing himself with the simplicity of another. Ah, my good Colonel, give up the problem, it is an enigma far above your powers to solve. That nature is too complex for *your* elucidation; in its intricate web no one thread holds the clue, but all is complicated, crossed, and entangled.

"Here comes a Cabinet messenger again," said Upton, as a courier's calèche drove up, and a well-dressed and well-looking fellow leaped out.

"Ah, Stanhope, how are you?" said Sir Horace, shaking his hand with what from him was warmth. "Do you know Colonel Harcourt? Well, Frank, what news do you bring me?"

"The best of news."

"From F. O., I suppose," said Upton, sighing.

"Just so. Adderley has told the King you are the only man capable to succeed him. The press says the same, and the clubs are all with you."

"Not one of them all, I'd venture to say, has asked whether I have the strength or health for it," said Sir Horace, with a voice of pathetic intonation.

"Why, as we never knew you want energy for whatever fell to your lot to do, we have the same hope still," said Stanhope.

"So say I, too," cried Harcourt. "Like many a good hunter, he'll do his work best when he is properly weighted."

"It is quite refreshing to listen to you both—creatures with crocodile digestion—talk to a man who suffers nightmare if he over-eat a dry biscuit at supper. I tell you frankly, it would be the death of me to take the Foreign Office. I'd not live through the

season—the very dinners would kill me, and then, the House, the heat, the turmoil, the worry of opposition, and the jaunting back and forward to Brighton or to Windsor!"

While he muttered these complaints, he continued to read with great rapidity the letters which Stanhope had brought him, and which, despite all his practised coolness, had evidently afforded him pleasure in the perusal.

"Adderley bore it," continued he, "just because he was a mere machine, wound up to play off so many despatches, like so many tunes; and then, he permitted a degree of interference on the King's part I never could have suffered; and he liked to be addressed by the King of Prussia as 'Dear Adderley;' but what do I care for all these vanities? Have I not seen enough of the thing they call the great world? Is not this retreat better and dearer to me than all the glare

and crash of London, or all the pomp and splendour of Windsor?"

"By Jove! I suspect you are right, after all," said Harcourt, with an honest energy of voice.

"Were I younger, and stronger in health, perhaps," said Upton, "this might have tempted me. Perhaps I can picture to myself what I might have made of it; for, you may perceive, George, these people have done nothing; they have been pouring hot water on the tea-leaves Pitt left them—no more."

"And you'd have a brewing of your own, I've no doubt," responded the other.

"I'd at least have foreseen the time when this compact, this holy alliance, should become impossible—when the developed intelligence of Europe would seek something else from their rulers than a well-concocted scheme of repression. I'd have provided for

the hour when England must either break with her own people or her allies; and I'd have inaugurated a new policy, based upon the enlarged views and extended intelligence of mankind."

"I'm not certain that I quite apprehend you," muttered Harcourt.

"No matter; but you can surely understand that if a set of mere mediocrities have saved England, a batch of clever men might have done something more. She came out of the last war the acknowledged head of Europe; does she now hold that place, and what will she be at the next great struggle?"

"England is as great as ever she was," cried Harcourt, boldly.

"Greater in nothing is she than in the implicit credulity of her people!" sighed Upton. "I only wish I could have the same faith in my physicians that she has in hers! By the way, Stanhope, what of that new fellow they have got at St. Leonard's? They tell me he

builds you up in some preparation of gypsum, so that you can't move or stir, and that the perfect repose thus imparted to the system is the highest order of restorative."

"They were just about to try him for manslaughter, when I left England," said Stanhope, laughing.

"As often the fate of genius in these days as in more barbarous times," said Upton. "I read his pamphlet with much interest. If you were going back, Harcourt, I'd have begged of you to try him."

"And I'm forced to say, I'd have refused you flatly."

"Yet it is precisely creatures of robust constitution, like you, that should submit themselves to these trials for the sake of humanity. Frail organisations, like mine, cannot brave these ordeals. What are they talking of in town? Any gossip afloat?"

"The change of ministry is the only topic. Glencore's affair has worn itself out."

"What was that about Glencore?" asked Upton, half indolently.

"A strange story; one can scarcely believe it. They say that Glencore, hearing of the King's great anxiety to be rid of the Queen, asked an audience of his Majesty, and actually suggested, as the best possible expedient, that his Majesty should deny the marriage. They add, that he reasoned the case so cleverly, and with such consummate craft and skill, it was with the greatest difficulty that the King could be persuaded that he was deranged. Some say his Majesty was outraged beyond endurance; others, that he was vastly amused, and laughed immoderately over it."

"And the world, how do they pronounce upon it?"

"There are two great parties—one for Glencore's sanity, the other against; but as I said before, the Cabinet changes have absorbed all interest latterly, and the Viscount

and his case are forgotten; and when I started, the great question was, who was to have the Foreign Office."

"I believe I could tell them one who will not," said Upton, with a melancholy smile. "Dine with me both of you to-day, at seven; no company, you know. There is an opera in the evening, and my box is at your service, if you like to go, and so, till then," and with a little gesture of the hand he waved an adieu, and glided from the room.

"I'm sorry he's not up to the work of office," said Harcourt; "there's plenty of ability in him."

"The best man we have," said Stanhope; "so they say at the Office."

"He's gone to lie down, I take it; he seemed much exhausted. What say you to a walk back to town?"

"I ask nothing better," said Stanhope; and they started for Naples.

CHAPTER II.

AN EVENING IN FLORENCE.

THAT happy valley of the Val d'Arno, in which fair Florence stands, possesses, amidst all its virtues, none more conspicuous than the blessed forgetfulness of the past, so eminently the gift of those who dwell there. Faults and follies of a few years back have so faded by time as to be already historical; and as, in certain climates, rocks and stones become shrined by lichens and moss-covered in a year or two, so here, in equally brief space, bygones are shrouded and shadowed in a way that nothing short of cruelty and violence could once more expose to view.

The palace where Lady Glencore once displayed all her attractions of beauty and toilette, and dispensed a hospitality of princely splendour, had remained for a course of time close-barred and shut up. The massive gate was locked, the windows shuttered, and curious tourists were told that there were objects of interest within, but it was impossible to obtain sight of them. The crowds who once flocked there at nightfall, and whose equipages filled the court, now drove on to other haunts, scarcely glancing as they passed at the darkened casements of the grim old edifice; when at length the rumour ran that "some one" had arrived there. Lights were seen in the porter's lodge, the iron "*grille*" was observed to open and shut, and tradespeople came and went within the building; and finally the assurance gained ground that its former owner had returned.

"Only think who has come back to us,"

said one of the idlers of the Cascine, as he lounged on the steps of a fashionable carriage—"La Nina!" And at once the story went far and near, repeated at every corner, and discussed in every circle; so that had a stranger to the place but caught the passing sounds, he would have heard that one name uttered in every group he encountered. La Nina! and why not the Countess of Glencore, or, at least, the Countess de la Torre? As when exiled royalists assume titles in accordance with fallen fortunes, so in Italy, injured fame seeks sympathy in the familiarity of the Christian name, and "Society" at once accepts the designation as that of those who throw themselves upon the affectionate kindness of the world, rather than insist upon its reverence and respect.

Many of her former friends were still there; but there was also a numerous class, principally foreigners, who only knew of her

by repute. The traditions of her beauty—her gracefulness—the charms of her demeanour, and the brilliancy of her diamonds, abounded. Her admirers were of all ages, from those who worshipped her loveliness to that not less enthusiastic section who swore by her cook; and it was indeed "great tidings" to hear that she had returned.

Some statistician has asserted that no less than a hundred thousand people awake every day in London, not one of whom knows where he will pass the night. Now, Florence is but a small city, and the lacquered-boot class bear but a slight proportion to the shoeless herd of humanity. Yet there is a very tolerable sprinkling of well-dressed, well-got-up individuals, who daily arise without the very vaguest conception of who is to house them, fire them, light them, and cigar them for the evening. They are an interesting class, and have this strong

appeal to human sympathy, that not one of them, by any possible effort, could contribute to his own support.

They toil not — neither do they spin. They have the very fewest of social qualities; they possess no conversational gifts; they are not even moderately good reporters of the passing events of the day. And yet, strange to say, the world they live in seems to have some need of them. Are they the last relics of a once gifted class—worn out, effete, and exhausted—degenerated like modern Greeks from those who once shook the Parthenon? or are they what anatomists call "rudimentary structures"—the first abortive attempts of nature to fashion something profitable and good? Who knows?

Amidst this class the Nina's arrival was announced as the happiest of all tidings; and speculation immediately set to work to imagine who would be the favourites of the house; what would be its habits and hours;

would she again enter the great world of society; or would she, as her quiet, unannounced arrival portended, seek a less conspicuous position? Nor was this the mere talk of the Cafés and the Cascine. The salons were eagerly discussing the very same theme.

In certain social conditions a degree of astuteness is acquired as to who may and who may not be visited, that, in its tortuous intricacy of reasons, would puzzle the craftiest head that ever wagged in Equity. Not that the code is a severe one; it is exactly in its lenity lies its difficulty—so much may be done, but so little may be fatal! The Countess in the present case enjoyed what in England is reckoned a great privilege—she was tried by her peers —or "something more." They were, however, all nice discriminators as to the class of case before them, and they knew well what danger there was in admitting to their

"guild" any with a little more disgrace than their neighbours. It was curious enough that she, in whose behalf all this solicitude was excited, should have been less than indifferent as to the result; and when, on the third day of the trial, a verdict was delivered in her favour, and a shower of visiting-cards at the porter's lodge declared that the act of her recognition had passed, her orders were that the cards should be sent back to their owners, as the Countess had not the honour of their acquaintance.

"Les grands coups se font respecter toujours," was the maxim of a great tactician in war and politics; and the adage is no less true in questions of social life. We are so apt to compute the strength of resources by the amount of pretension, that we often yield the victory to the mere declaration of force. We are not, however, about to dwell on this theme—our business being less with

those who discussed her, than with the Countess of Glencore herself.

In a large salon, hung with costly tapestries, and furnished in the most expensive style, sat two ladies at opposite sides of the fire. They were both richly dressed, and one of them (it was Lady Glencore), as she held a screen before her face, displayed a number of valuable rings on her fingers, and a massive bracelet of enamel with a large emerald pendant. The other, not less magnificently attired, wore an imperial portrait suspended by a chain around her neck, and a small knot of white and green ribbon on her shoulder, to denote her quality of a lady in waiting at Court. There was something almost queenly in the haughty dignity of her manner, and an air of command in the tone with which she addressed her companion. It was our acquaintance the Princess Sabloukoff, just escaped from a dinner

and reception at the Pitti Palace, and carrying away with her some of the proud traditions of the society she had quitted.

"What hour did you tell them they might come, Nina?" asked she.

"Not before midnight, my dear Princess, I wanted to have a talk with you first. It is long since we have met, and I have so much to tell you."

"*Cara mia*," said the other, carelessly; "I know everything already. There is nothing you have done, nothing that has happened to you, that I am not aware of. I might go further and say, that I have looked with secret pleasure at the course of events which to your short-sightedness seemed disastrous."

"I can scarce conceive that possible," said the Countess, sighing.

"Naturally enough, perhaps, because you never knew the greatest of all blessings in this life, which is—liberty. Separation from

your husband, my dear Nina, did not emancipate you from the tiresome requirements of the world. You got rid of *him*, to be sure, but not of those who regarded you as his wife. It required the act of courage by which you cut with these people for ever, to assert the freedom I speak of."

"I almost shudder at the contest I have provoked, and had you not insisted on it——"

"You had gone back again to the old slavery, to be pitied and compassionated, and condoled with instead of being feared and envied," said the other; and as she spoke, her flashing eyes and quivering brows gave an expression almost tiger-like to her features. "What was there about your house and its habits distinctive before? What gave you any pre-eminence above those that surrounded you? You were better looking, yourself; better dressed; your salons better lighted; your dinners

more choice—there was the end of it. *Your* company was *their* company—*your* associates were *theirs*. The homage *you* received to-day had been yesterday the incense of another. There was not a bouquet nor a flattery offered to *you* that had not its *fac-simile* doing service in some other quarter. You were 'one of them,' Nina, obliged to follow their laws and subscribe to their ideas; and while *they* traded on the wealth of your attractions, *you* derived nothing from the partnership but the same share as those about you."

"And how will it be now?" asked the Countess, half in fear, half in hope.

"How will it be now? I'll tell you. This house will be the resort of every distinguished man, not of Italy, but of the world at large. Here will come the highest of every nation, as to a circle where they can say, and hear, and suggest a thousand things in the freedom of unauthorised intercourse.

You will not drain Florence alone, but all the great cities of Europe, of its best talkers and deepest thinkers. The statesman and the author, and the sculptor and the musician, will hasten to a neutral territory, where for the time a kind of equality will prevail. The weary Minister, escaping from a Court festival, will come here to unbend; the witty converser will store himself with his best resources for your salons. There will be all the freedom of a club to these men, with the added charm of that fascination your presence will confer; and thus, through all their intercourse, will be felt that '*parfum de femme*,' as Balzac calls it, which both elevates and entrances."

"But will not society revenge itself on all this?"

"It will invent a hundred calumnious reports and shocking stories, but these, like the criticisms on an immoral play, will only serve to fill the house. Men—even the quiet ones

—will be eager to see what it is that constitutes the charm of these gatherings; and one charm there is that never misses its success. Have you ever experienced in visiting some great gallery, or still more, some choice collection of works of art, a strange, mysterious sense of awe for objects which you rather knew to be great by the testimony of others, than felt able personally to appreciate? You were conscious that the picture was painted by Raphael, or the cup carved by Cellini, and, independently of all the pleasure it yielded you, arose a sense of homage to its actual worth. The same is the case in society with illustrious men. They may seem slower of apprehension, less ready at reply, less apt to understand, but there they are, Originals, not Copies of greatness. They represent value."

Have we said enough to show our reader the kind of persuasion by which Madame de Sabloukoff led her friend into this new path?

The flattery of the argument was, after all, its success, and the Countess was fascinated by fancying herself something more than the handsomest and the best-dressed woman in Florence. They who constitute a free port of their house will have certainly abundance of trade, and invite also no small amount of enterprise.

A little after midnight the salons began to fill, and from the Opera and the other theatres flocked in all that was pleasant, fashionable, and idle of Florence. The old beau, painted, padded, and essenced, came with the younger and not less elaborately dressed "fashionable," great in watch chains and splendid in waistcoat buttons; long-haired artists and moustached hussars mingled with close-shaven actors and pale-faced authors: men of the world, of politics, of finance, of letters, of the turf; all were there. There was the gossip of the Bourse and the cabinet—the green-room and the stable. The scandal of

society, the events of club life, the world's doings in dinners, divorces, and duels were all revealed and discussed, amidst the most profuse gratitude to the Countess for coming back again to that society which scarcely survived her desertion.

They were not, it is but fair to say, all that the Princess Sabloukoff had depicted them; but there was still a very fair sprinkling of witty, pleasant talkers. The ease of admission permitted any former intimate to present his friend, and thus at once, on the very first night of receiving, the Countess saw her salons crowded. They smoked, and sang, and laughed, and played *écarté*, and told good stories. They drew caricatures, imitated well-known actors, and even preachers, talking away with a volubility that left few listeners; and then there was a supper laid out on a table too small to accommodate even by standing, so that each carried away his plate, and bivouacked with others of his

friends, here and there, through the rooms. All was contrived to impart a sense of independence and freedom—all, to convey an impression of "license" special to the place, that made the most rigid unbend, and relaxed the gravity of many who seldom laughed.

As in certain chemical compounds a mere drop of some one powerful ingredient will change the whole property of the mass, eliciting new elements, correcting this, developing that, and, even to the eye, announcing by altered colour the wondrous change accomplished; so here the element of womanhood, infinitely small in proportion as it was, imparted a tone and a refinement to this orgie, which, without it, has degenerated into coarseness. The Countess's beautiful niece, Ida Della Torre, was also there, singing at times with all an artist's excellence the triumphs of operatic music; at others, warbling over those "canzonettes," which, to Italian ears, embody all that they know of

love of country. How could such a reception be other than successful? or how could the guests, as they poured forth into the silent street at daybreak, do aught but exult that such a house was added to the haunts of Florence—so lovely a group had returned to adorn their fair city?

In a burst of this enthusiastic gratitude they sang a serenade before they separated; and then, as the closed curtains showed them that the inmates had left the windows, they uttered the last "felice Notte," and departed.

"And so Wahnsdorf never made his appearance?" said the Princess, as she was once more alone with the Countess.

"I scarcely expected him. He knows the ill-feeling towards his countrymen amongst Italians, and he rarely enters society where he may meet them."

"It is strange that he should marry one!" said she, half musingly.

"He fell in love—there's the whole secret

of it," said the Countess. "He fell in love, and his passion encountered certain difficulties. His rank was one of them, Ida's indifference another."

"And how have they been got over?"

"Evaded rather than surmounted. He has only his own consent after all."

"And Ida, does she care for him?"

"I suspect not: but she will marry him. Pique will often do what affection would fail in. The secret history of the affair is this: There was a youth at Massa, who, while he lived there, made our acquaintance and became even intimate at the Villa; he was a sculptor of some talent, and, as many thought, of considerable promise. I engaged him to give Ida lessons in modelling, and, in this way, they were constantly together. Whether Ida liked him or not I cannot say, but it is beyond a doubt that he loved her. In fact, everything he produced in his art only showed what his mind was

full of—her image was everywhere. This aroused Wahnsdorf's jealousy, and he urged me strongly to dismiss Greppi, and shut my doors to him. At first I consented, for I had a strange sense, not exactly of dislike, but misgiving, of the youth. I had a feeling towards him that if I attempted to convey to you, it would seem as though in all this affair I had suffered myself to be blinded by passion, not guided by reason. There were times that I felt a deep interest in the youth —his genius, his ardour, his very poverty engaged my sympathy; and then, stronger than all these, was a strange, mysterious sense of terror at sight of him, for he was the very image of one who has worked all the evil of my life."

"Was not this a mere fancy?" said the Princess, compassionately, for she saw the shuddering emotion these words had cost her.

"It was not alone his look," continued

the Countess, speaking now with impetuous eagerness; "it was not merely his features, but their every play and movement; his gestures when excited; the very voice was *his*. I saw him once excited to violent passion; it was some taunt that Wahnsdorf uttered about men of unknown or ignoble origin; and then He—he himself seemed to stand before me as I have so often seen him, in his terrible outbursts of rage. The sight brought back to me the dreadful recollection of those scenes—scenes," said she, looking wildly around her, "that if these old walls could speak might freeze your heart where you are sitting.

"You have heard, but you cannot know, the miserable life we led together; the frantic jealousy that maddened every hour of his existence; how, in all the harmless freedom of our Italian life, he saw causes of suspicion and distrust; how, by his rudeness to this one, his coldness to that, he estranged

me from all who have been my dearest intimates and friends, dictating to me the while the custom of a land and a people I had never seen nor wished to see; till at last I was left a mockery to some, an object of pity to others, amidst a society where once I reigned supreme—and all for a man that I had ceased to love! It was from this same life of misery, unrewarded by the affection by which jealousy sometimes compensates for its tyranny, that I escaped, to attach myself to the fortunes of that unhappy Princess whose lot bore some resemblance to my own.

"I know well that he ascribed my desertion to another cause, and—shall I own it to you?—I had a savage pleasure in leaving him to the delusion. It was the only vengeance within my reach, and I grasped it with eagerness. Nothing was easier for me than to disprove it—a mere word would have shown the falsehood of the charge, but I

would not utter it. I knew his nature well, and that the insult to his name and the stain to his honour would be the heaviest of all injuries to him; and they were so. He drove *me* from my home—I banished *him* from the world. It is true I never reckoned on the cruel blow he had yet in store for me, and when it fell I was crushed and stunned. There was now a declared war between us—each to do his worst to the other. It was less succumbing before him, than to meditate and determine on the future, that I fled from Florence. It was not here and in such a society I should have to blush for any imputation. But I had always held my place proudly, perhaps too proudly, here, and I did not care to enter upon that campaign of defence—that stooping to cultivate alliances—that humble game of conciliation—that must ensue.

"I went away into banishment. I went to Corsica, and thence to Massa. I was

meditating a journey to the East. I was even speculating on establishing myself there for the rest of my life, when your letters changed my plans. You once more kindled in my heart a love of life by instilling a love of vengeance. You suggested to me the idea of coming back here boldly, and confronting the world proudly."

"Do not mistake me, Nina," said the Princess, "the 'Vendetta' was the last thing in my thoughts. I was too deeply concerned for you, to be turned away from my object by any distracting influence. It was that you should give a bold denial—the boldest—to your husband's calumny, I counselled your return. My advice was—Disregard, and, by disregarding, deny the foul slander he has invented. Go back to the world in the rank that is yours and that you never forfeited, and then challenge him to oppose your claim to it."

"And do you think that for such a consi-

deration as this—the honour to bear the name of a man I loathe—that I'd face that world I know so well? No, no; believe me I had very different reasons. I was resolved that my future life, *my* name, *his* name should gain a European notoriety. I am well aware that when a woman is made a public talk, when once her name comes sufficiently often before the world, let it be for what you will, her beauty, her will, her extravagance, her dress, from that hour her fame is perilled, and the society she has overtopped take their vengeance in slandering her character. To be before the world as a woman is to be arraigned. If ever there was a man who dreaded such a destiny for his wife, it was *he*. The impertinences of the press had greater terrors for his heart than aught else in life, and I resolved that he should taste them."

"How have you mistaken—how have

you misunderstood me, Nina!" said the Princess, sorrowfully.

"Not so," cried she, eagerly. "You only saw one advantage in the plan you counselled. *I* perceived that it contained a double benefit."

"But remember, dearest Nina, revenge is the most costly of all pleasures, if one pays for it with all that they possess—their tranquillity. I myself might have indulged such thoughts as yours; there were many points alike in our fortunes; but to have followed such a course would be like the wisdom of one who inoculates himself with a deadly malady that he may impart the poison to another."

"Must I again tell you, that in all I have done I cared less how it might serve *me* than how it might wound *him?* I know you cannot understand this sentiment; I do not ask of you to sympathise with it. *Your* talents enabled you to shape out a high and

ambitious career for yourself. You loved the great intrigues of state, and were well fitted to conduct or control them. None such gifts were mine. I was and I am still a mere creature of society. I never soared, even in fancy, beyond the triumphs which the world of fashion decrees. A cruel destiny excluded me from the pleasures of a life that would have amply satisfied me, and there is nothing left but to avenge myself on the cause."

"My dearest Nina, with all your self-stimulation you cannot make yourself the vindictive creature you would appear," said the Princess, smiling.

"How little do you know my Italian blood!" said the other, passionately. "That boy—he was not much more than boy—that Greppi was, as I told you, the very image of Glencore. The same dark skin, the same heavy brow, the same cold, stern look which even a smile did not enliven;

even to the impassive air with which he listened to a provocation—all were alike. Well, the resemblance has cost him dearly. I consented at last to Wahnsdorf's continual entreaty to exclude him from the Villa, and charged the Count with the commission. I am not sure that he expended an excess of delicacy on the task—I half fear me that he did the act more rudely than was needed. At all events, a quarrel was the result, and a challenge to a duel. I only knew of this when all was over—believe me I should never have permitted it. However, the result was as safe in the hands of Fate. The youth fled from Massa, and though Wahnsdorf followed him, they never met."

"There was no duel, you say?" cried the Princess, eagerly.

"How could there be? This Greppi never went to the rendezvous. He quitted Massa during the night, and has never since been heard of. In this, I own to you, he

was not like *him*." And, as she said the words, the tears swam in her eyes, and rolled down her cheeks.

"May I ask you how you learned all this?"

"From Wahnsdorf; on his return, in a week or two, he told me all. Ida, at first, would not believe it; but how could she discredit what was plain and palpable? Greppi was gone. All the inquiries of the police were in vain as to his route—none could guess how he had escaped."

"And this account was given you—you, yourself—by Wahnsdorf?" repeated the Princess.

"Yes, to myself. Why should he have concealed it?"

"And now he is to marry Ida?" said the Princess, half musingly, to herself.

"We hope, with *your* aid, that it may be so. The family difficulties are great; Wahnsdorf's rank is not ours, but he per-

sists in saying that to your management nothing is impossible."

"His opinion is too flattering," said the Princess, with a cold gravity of manner.

"But you surely will not refuse us your assistance."

"You may count upon me, even for more than you ask," said the Princess, rising. "How late it is! day is breaking already!" And so, with a tender embrace, they parted.

CHAPTER III.

MADAME DE SABLOUKOFF IN THE MORNING.

MADAME DE SABLOUKOFF inhabited "the grand apartment" of the Hôtel d'Italie, which is the handsomest quarter of the great hotel of Florence. The same suite which had once the distinguished honour of receiving a Czar and a King of Prussia, and Heaven knows how many lesser potentates! was now devoted to one, who, though not of the small number of the elect-in-purple, was yet, in her way, what politicians call a "Puissance."

As in the drama a vast number of agencies are required for the due performance of a piece, so, on the greater stage of life, many

of the chief motive powers rarely are known to the public eye. The Princess was of this number. She was behind the scenes, in more than one sense, and had her share in the great events of her time.

While her beauty lasted, she had traded on the great capital of attractions, which were unsurpassed in Europe. As the perishable flower faded, she, with prudential foresight, laid up a treasure in secret knowledge of people and their acts, which made her dreaded and feared where she was once admired and flattered. Perhaps, it is by no means improbable, she preferred this latter tribute to the former.

Although the strong sunlight was tempered by the closed jalousies and the drawn muslin curtains, she sat with her back to the window, so that her features were but dimly visible in the darkened atmosphere of the room. There was something of coquetry in this; but there was more—there was a dash

of semi-secrecy in the air of gloom and stillness around, which gave to each visitor who presented himself—and she received but one at a time—an impression of being admitted to an audience of confidence and trust. The mute-like servant who waited in the corridor without, and who drew back a massive curtain on your entrance, also aided the delusion, imparting to the interview a character of mysterious solemnity.

Through that solemn portal there had passed, in and out, during the morning, various dignitaries of the land, ministers and envoys, and grand "charges" of the Court. The embroidered key of the Chamberlain, and the purple stockings of a Nuncio had come and gone; and now there was a brief pause, for the groom in waiting had informed the crowd in the ante-chamber that the Princess could receive no more. Then there was a hurried scrawling of great names in a large book, a shower of visiting-cards, and

all was over—the fine equipages of fine people dashed off, and the court-yard of the hotel was empty.

The large clock on the mantelpiece struck three, and Madame de Sabloukoff compared the time with her watch, and by a movement of impatience showed a feeling of displeasure. She was not accustomed to have her appointments lightly treated, and he for whom she had fixed an hour was now thirty minutes behind his time. She had been known to resent such unpunctuality, and she looked as though she might do so again. "I remember the day when his grand-uncle descended from his carriage to speak to me," muttered she; "and that same grand-uncle was an emperor."

Perhaps the chance reflexion of her image in the large glass before her somewhat embittered the recollection, for her features flushed, and as suddenly grew pale again. It may have been that her mind went rapidly

back to a period when her fascination was a despotism that even the highest and the haughtiest obeyed. "Too true," said she, speaking to herself, "time has dealt heavily with us all. But *they* are no more what they once were than am I. Their old compact of mutual assistance is crumbling away under the pressure of new rivalries and new pretensions. Kings and Kaisers will soon be like bygone beauties. I wonder will they bear their altered fortune as heroically?" It is but just to say that her tremulous accents and quivering lip bore little evidence of the heroism she spoke of.

She rang the bell violently, and as the servant entered she said, but in a voice of perfect unconcern,

"When the Count Von Wahnsdorf calls, you will tell him that I am engaged, but will receive him to-morrow——"

"And why not to-day, charming Princess?" said a young man, entering hastily, and whose

graceful but somewhat haughty air set off to every advantage his splendid Hungarian costume. "Why not now?" said he, stooping to kiss her hand with respectful gallantry. She motioned to the servant to withdraw, and they were alone.

"You are not over exact in keeping an appointment, Monsieur," said she, stiffly. "It is somewhat cruel to remind me that my claims in this respect have grown antiquated."

"I fancied myself the soul of punctuality, my dear Princess," said he, adjusting the embroidered pelisse he wore over his shoulder. "You mentioned four as the hour——"

"I said three o'clock," replied she, coldly.

"Three, or four, or even five, what does it signify?" said he, carelessly. "We have not either of us, I suspect, much occupation to engage us; and if I have interfered with your other plans—if you have plans—a

thousand pardons!" cried he, suddenly, as the deep colour of her face and her flashing eye warned him that he had gone too far; "but the fact is, I was detained at the riding-school. They have sent me some young horses from the Banat, and I went over to look at them."

"The Count de Wahnsdorf knows that he need make no apologies to Madame de Sabloukoff," said she, calmly; "but it were just as graceful, perhaps, to affect them. My dear Count," continued she, but in a tone perfectly free from all touch of irritation, "I have asked to see and speak with you on matters purely your own——"

"You want to dissuade me from this marriage," said he, interrupting; "but I fancy that I have already listened to everything that can be urged on that affair. If you have any argument other than the old one about misalliance, and the rest of it, I'll hear it patiently; though I tell you beforehand that

I should like to learn that a connexion with an imperial house had some advantage besides that of a continual barrier to one's wishes."

"I understand," said she, quietly, "that you named the terms on which you would abandon this project—is it not so?"

"Who told *you* that?" cried he, angrily. "Is this another specimen of the delicacy with which ministers treat a person of my station?"

"To discuss that point, Count, would lead us wide of our mark. Am I to conclude that my informant was correct?"

"How can I tell what may have been reported to you?" said he, almost rudely.

"You shall hear and judge for yourself," was the calm answer. "Count Kollorath informed me that you offered to abandon this marriage, on condition that you were appointed to the command of the Pahlen Hussars."

The young man's face became scarlet with shame, and he tried twice to speak, but unavailingly.

With a merciless slowness of utterance, and a manner of the most unmoved sternness, she went on: "I did not deem the proposal at all exorbitant. It was a price that they could well afford to pay."

"Well, they refused me," said he, bluntly.

"Not exactly refused you," said she, more gently. "They reminded you of the necessity of conforming, of at least appearing to conform, to the rules of the service; that you had only been a few months in command of a squadron; that your debts, which were considerable, had been noised about the world, so that a little time should elapse, and a favourable opportunity present itself, before this promotion could be effected."

"How correctly they have instructed you in all the details of this affair!" said he, with a scornful smile.

"It is a rare event when I am misinformed, sir," was her cold reply; "nor could it redound to the advantage of those who ask my advice to afford me incorrect information."

"Then, I am quite unable to perceive what you want with *me*," cried he. "It is plain enough you are in possession of all that I could tell you. Or is all this only the prelude to some menace or other?"

She made no other answer to this rude question than by a smile so dubious in its meaning, it might imply scorn, or pity, or even sorrow.

"You must not wonder if I be angry," continued he, in an accent that betokened shame at his own violence. "They have treated me so long as a fool that they have made me something worse than one."

"I am not offended by your warmth, Count," said she, softly. "It is, at least, the guarantee of your sincerity. I tell you,

therefore, I have no threat to hold over you. It will be enough that I can show you the impolicy of this marriage—I don't want to use a stronger word—what estrangement it will lead to as regards your own family, how inadequately it will respond to the sacrifices it must cost."

"That consideration is for me to think of, Madam," said he, proudly.

"And for your friends also," interposed she, softly.

"If by my friends you mean those who have watched every occasion of my life to oppose my plans and thwart my wishes, I conclude that they will prove themselves as vigilant now as heretofore; but I am getting somewhat weary of this friendship."

"My dear Count, give me a patient, if possible, an indulgent hearing for five minutes, or even half that time, and I hope it will save us both a world of misconception. If this marriage that you are so eager

to contract were an affair of love, of that ardent, passionate love which recognises no obstacle nor acknowledges any barrier to its wishes, I could regard the question as one of those every-day events in life whose uniformity is seldom broken by a new incident; for love stories have a terrible sameness in them." She smiled as she said this, and in such a way as to make him smile at first, and then laugh heartily.

"But if," resumed she, seriously—"if I only see in this project a mere caprice, half, more than half, based upon the pleasure of wounding family pride, or of coercing those who have hitherto dictated to you; if, besides this, I perceive that there is no strong affection on either side—none of that impetuous passion which the world accepts as 'the attenuating circumstance' in rash marriages——"

"And who has told you that I do not love Ida or that she is not devoted with her

whole heart to *me?*" cried he, interrupting her.

"You yourself have told the first. You have shown by the price you have laid on the object the value at which you estimate it. As for the latter part of your question——" She paused and arranged the folds of her shawl, purposely playing with his impatience, and enjoying it.

"Well," cried he, "as for the latter part; go on."

"It scarcely requires an answer. I saw Ida Della Torre last night in a society of which her affianced husband was not one; and, I will be bold enough to say, hers was not the bearing that bespoke engaged affections."

"Indeed!" said he, but in a tone that indicated neither displeasure nor surprise.

"It was as I have told you, Count. Surrounded by the youth of Florence, such as you know them, she laughed, and talked, and

sang, in all the careless gaiety of a heart at ease; or, if at moments a shade of sadness crossed her features, it was so brief that only one observing her closely as myself could mark it."

"And how did that subtle intelligence of yours interpret this show of sorrow?" said he, in a voice of mockery, but yet of deep anxiety.

"My subtle intelligence was not taxed to guess, for I knew her secret," said the Princess, with all the strength of conscious power.

"Her secret, her secret!" said he, eagerly. "What do you mean by that?"

The Princess smiled coldly, and said, "I have not yet found my frankness so well repaid that I should continue to extend it."

"What is the reward to be, Madam? Name it," said he, boldly.

"The same candour on your part, Count; I ask for no more."

"But what have I to reveal—what mystery is there that your omniscience has not penetrated ?"

"There may be some that your frankness has not avowed, my dear Count."

"If you refer to what you have called Ida's secret——"

"No," broke she in. "I was now alluding to what might be called *your* secret."

"Mine! *my* secret!" exclaimed he. But though the tone was meant to convey great astonishment, the confusion of his manner was far more apparent.

"Your secret, Count," she repeated, slowly, "which has been just as safe in my keeping as if it had been confided to me on honour."

"I was not aware how much I owed to your discretion, Madam," said he, scoffingly.

"I am but too happy when any services of mine can rescue the fame of a great family from reproach, sir," replied she, proudly; for all the control she had heretofore im-

posed upon her temper seemed at last to have yielded to offended dignity. "Happily for that illustrious house—happily for you, too—I am one of a very few who know of Count Wahnsdorf's doings. To have suffered your antagonist in a duel to be tracked, arrested, and imprisoned in an Austrian fortress, when a word from you had either warned him of his peril or averted the danger, was bad enough; but to have stigmatised his name with cowardice, and to have defamed him because he was your rival, was far worse."

Wahnsdorf struck the table with his clenched fist till it shook beneath the blow, but never uttered a word, while, with increased energy, she continued:

"Every step of this bad history is known to me; every detail of it, from your gross and insulting provocation to this poor friendless youth, to the last scene of his committal to a dungeon."

"And, of course, you have related your interesting narrative to Ida?" cried he.

"No, sir; the respect which I have never lost for those whose name you bear had been quite enough to restrain me, had I not even other thoughts."

"And what may they be?" asked he.

"To take the first opportunity of finding myself alone with you, to represent how nearly it concerns your honour that this affair should never be bruited abroad; to insist upon your lending every aid to obtain this young man's liberation; to show that the provocation came from yourself; and, lastly, all-painful though it be, to remove from him the stain you have inflicted, and to reinstate him in the esteem that your calumny may have robbed him of. These were the other thoughts I alluded to."

"And you fancy that I am to engage in this sea of trouble for the sake of some

nameless bastard, while in doing so I compromise myself and my own honour ?"

"Do you prefer that it should be done by another, Count Wahnsdorf?" asked she.

"This is a threat, Madam."

"All the speedier will the matter be settled if you understand it as such."

"And, of course, the next condition will be for me to resign my pretensions to Ida in his favour," said he, with a savage irony.

"I stipulate for nothing of the sort; Count Wahnsdorf's pretensions will be to-morrow just where they are to-day."

"You hold them cheaply, Madam. I am indeed unfortunate in all my pursuit of your esteem."

"You live in a sphere to command it, sir," was her reply, given with a counterfeited humility; and whether it was the tone of mingled insolence and submission she assumed, or simply the sense of his own

unworthiness in her sight, but Wahnsdorf cowered before her like a frightened child. At this moment the servant entered, and presented a visiting-card to the Princess.

"Ah, he comes in an opportune moment," cried she. "This is the minister of the Duke of Massa's household—the Chevalier Stubber. Yes," continued she to the servant, "I will receive him."

If there was not any conspicuous gracefulness in the Chevalier's approach, there was an air of quiet self-possession that bespoke a sense of his own worth and importance; and while he turned to pay his respects to the young Count, his unpolished manner was not devoid of a certain dignity.

"It is a fortunate chance by which I find you here, Count Wahnsdorf," said he, "for you will be glad to learn that the young fellow you had that affair with at Massa has just been liberated."

"When? and how?" cried the Princess, hastily.

"As to the time, it must be about four days ago, as my letters inform me; as to the how, I fancy the Count can best inform you; he has interested himself greatly in the matter." The Count blushed deeply, and turned away to hide his face, but not so quickly as to miss the expression of scornful meaning with which the Princess regarded him.

"But I want to hear the details, Chevalier," said she.

"And I can give you none, Madam. My despatches simply mention that the act of arrest was discovered in some way to be informal. Sir Horace Upton proved so much. There then arose a question of giving him up to us, but my master declined the honour; he would have no trouble, he said, with England or Englishmen; and some say that the youth claims an English nationality. The cabinet

of Vienna are, perhaps, like-minded in the matter; at all events, he is free, and will be here to-morrow."

"Then I shall invite him to dinner, and beg both of you gentlemen to meet him," said she, with a voice wherein a tone of malicious drollery mingled.

"I am your servant, Madam," said Stubber.

"And I am engaged," said Wahnsdorf, taking up his chako.

"You are off for Vienna to-night, Count Wahnsdorf," whispered the Princess in his ear.

"What do you mean, Madam?" said he, in a tone equally low.

"Only that I have a letter written for the Archduchess Sophia, which I desire to entrust to your hands. You may as well read ere I seal it."

The Count took the letter from her hand,

and retired towards the window to read it. While she conversed eagerly with Stubber, she did not fail from time to time to glance towards the other, and mark the expression of his features as he folded and replaced the letter in its envelope, and slowly approaching her, said,

"You are most discreet, Madam."

"I hope I am just, sir," said she, modestly.

"This was something of a difficult undertaking, too," said he, with an equivocal smile.

"It was certainly a pleasant and proud one, sir, as it always must be, to write to a mother in commendation of her son. By the way, Chevalier, you have forgotten to make your compliments to the Count on his promotion——"

"I have not heard of it, Madam; what may it be?" asked Stubber.

"To the command of the Pahlen Hussars,

sir; one of the proudest 'charges' of the empire."

A rush of blood to Wahnsdorf's face was as quickly followed by a deadly pallor, and with a broken, faint utterance, he said "Good-by," and left the room.

"A fine young fellow—the very picture of a soldier," exclaimed Stubber, looking after him.

"A chevalier of the olden time, sir—the very soul of honour," said the Princess, enthusiastically. "And now for a little gossip with yourself."

It is not "in our brief" to record what passed in that chatty interview; plenty of state secrets and state gossip there was—abundance of that dangerous trifling which mixes up the passions of society with the great game of politics, and makes statecraft feel the impress of men's whims and caprices. We were just beginning that era, "the

policy of resentments," which has since pervaded Europe, and the Chevalier and the Princess were sufficiently behind the scenes to have many things to communicate; and here we must leave them while we hasten on to other scenes and other actors.

CHAPTER IV.

DOINGS IN DOWNING-STREET.

The dull old precincts of Downing-street were more than usually astir. Hackney-coaches and cabs at an early hour, private chariots somewhat later, went to and fro along the dreary pavement, and two cabinet messengers with splashed calèches arrived in hot haste from Dover. Frequent, too, were the messages from the House; a leading oppositionist was then thundering away against the Government, inveighing against the treacherous character of their foreign policy, and indignantly calling on them for certain despatches to their late envoy at

Naples. At every cheer which greeted him from his party a fresh missive would be despatched from the Treasury benches, and the whisper, at first cautiously muttered, grew louder and louder, "Why does not Upton come down?"

So intricate has been the web of our petty entanglements, so complex the threads of those small intrigues by which we have earned our sobriquet of the "perfide Albion," that it is difficult at this time of day to recal the exact question whose solution, in the words of the orator of the debate, "placed us either at the head of Europe, or consigned us to the fatal mediocrity of a third-rate power." The prophecy, whichever way read, gives us unhappily no clue to the matter in hand, and we are only left to conjecture that it was an intervention in Spain, or "something about the Poles." As is usual in such cases, the matter, insignificant enough in itself, was converted into a serious attack

on the Government, and all the strength of the opposition was arrayed to give power and consistency to the assault. As is equally usual, the cabinet was totally unprepared for defence; either they had altogether undervalued the subject, or they trusted to the secrecy with which they had conducted it; whichever of these be the right explanation, each minister could only say to his colleague, "It never came before *me;* Upton knows all about it."

"And where is Upton?—why does he not come down?"—were again and again reiterated; while a shower of messages and even mandates invoked his presence.

The last of these was a peremptory note from no less a person than the Premier himself, written in three very significant words, thus: "COME, OR GO;" and given to a trusty whip, the Hon. Gerald Neville, to deliver.

Armed with this not very conciliatory document, the well-practised tactician drew

up to the door of the Foreign Office, and demanded to see the Secretary of State.

"Give him this card and this note, sir," said he to the well-dressed and very placid young gentleman who acted as his private secretary.

"Sir Horace is very poorly, sir; he is at this moment in a mineral bath; but as the matter you say is pressing, he will see you. Will you pass this way."

Mr. Neville followed his guide through an infinity of passages, and at length reached a large folding-door, opening one side of which he was ushered into a spacious apartment, but so thoroughly impregnated with a thick and offensive vapour, that he could barely perceive, through the mist, the bath in which Upton lay reclined, and the figure of a man, whose look and attitude bespoke the doctor, beside him.

"Ah, my dear fellow," sighed Upton, extending two dripping fingers in salutation;

"you have come in at the death. This is the last of it!"

"No, no; don't say that," cried the other, encouragingly. "Have you had any sudden seizure? What is the nature of it?"

"He," said he, looking round to the doctor, "calls it 'arachnoidal trismus,' a thing, he says, that they have all of them ignored for many a day, though Charlemagne died of it. Ah, doctor"—and he addressed a question to him in German.

A growled volley of gutturals ensued, and Upton went on:

"Yes, Charlemagne—Melancthon had it, but lingered for years. It is the peculiar affection of great intellectual natures overtaxed and over-worked."

Whether there was that in the manner of the sick man that inspired hope, or something in the aspect of the doctor that suggested distrust, or a mixture of the two together, but certainly Neville rapidly rallied from the

fears which had beset him on entering, and in a voice of a more cheery tone, said,

"Come, come, Sir Horace, you'll throw off this as you have done other such attacks. You have never been wanting either to your friends or yourself when the hour of emergency called. We are in a moment of such difficulty now, and you alone can rescue us."

"How cruel of the Duke to write me that!" sighed Upton, as he held up the piece of paper from which the water had obliterated all trace of the words. "It was so inconsiderate—eh, Neville?"

"I'm not aware of the terms he employed," said the other.

This was the very admission that Upton sought to obtain, and in a far more cheery voice he said,

"If I was capable of the effort—if Doctor Geüimirstad thought it safe for me to venture —I could set all this to right. These people are all talking 'without book,' Neville—the

ever recurring blunder of an opposition when they address themselves to a foreign question: they go upon a newspaper paragraph, or the equally incorrect 'private communication from a friend.' Men in office alone can attain to truth—exact truth—about questions of foreign policy."

"The debate is taking a serious turn, however," interposed Neville. "They reiterate very bold assertions, which none of our people are in a position to contradict. Their confidence is evidently increasing with the show of confusion in our ranks. Something must be done to meet them, and that quickly."

"Well, I suppose I must go," sighed Upton; and as he held out his wrist to have his pulse felt, he addressed a few words to the doctor.

"He calls it 'a life period,' Neville. He says that he won't answer for the consequences."

The doctor muttered on.

"He adds, that the trismus may be thus converted into 'Bi-trismus.' Just imagine Bi-trismus!"

This was a stretch of fancy clear and away beyond Neville's apprehension, and he began to feel certain misgivings about pushing a request so full of danger; but from this he was in a measure relieved by the tone in which Upton now addressed his valet with directions as to the dress he intended to wear. "The loose pelisse, with the astracan, Giuseppe, and that vest of 'cramoisie' velvet; and if you will just glance at the newspaper, Neville, in the next room, I'll come to you immediately."

The newspapers of the morning after this interview afford us the speediest mode of completing the incidents; and the concluding sentences of a leading article will be enough to place before our readers what ensued:

"It was at this moment, and amidst the most enthusiastic cheers of the Treasury bench, that Sir Horace Upton entered the House. Leaning on the arm of Mr. Neville, he slowly passed up and took his accustomed place. The traces of severe illness in his features, and the great debility which his gestures displayed, gave an unusual interest to a scene already almost dramatic in its character. For a moment the great chief of opposition was obliged to pause in his assault to let this flood-tide of sympathy pass on, and when at length he did resume, it was plain to see how much the tone of his invective had been tempered by a respect for the actual feeling of the House. The necessity for this act of deference, added to the consciousness that he was in presence of the man whose acts he so strenuously denounced, were too much for the nerves of the orator, and he came to an abrupt conclusion, whose

confused and uncertain sentences scarcely warranted the cheers with which his friends rallied him.

"Sir Horace rose at once to reply. His voice was at first so inarticulate that we could but catch the burden of what he said —a request that the House would accord him all the indulgence which his state of debility and suffering called for. If the first few sentences he uttered imparted a painful significance to the entreaty, it very soon became apparent that he had no occasion to bespeak such indulgence. In a voice that gained strength and fulness as he proceeded, he entered upon what might be called a narrative of the foreign policy of the administration, clearly showing that their course was guided by certain great principles which dictated a line of action firm and undeviating; that the measures of the Government, however modified by passing events in Europe, had been uniformly consistent—based upon the faith of treaties—but

ever mindful of the growing requirements of the age. Through a narrative of singular complexity he guided himself with consummate skill, and though detailing events which occupied every region of the globe, neither confusion nor inconsistency ever marred the recital, and names, and places, and dates were quoted by him without any artificial aid to memory."

There was in the polished air, and calm, dispassionate delivery of the speaker, something which seemed to charm the ears of those who for four hours before had been so mercilessly assailed by all the vituperation and insolence of party animosity. It was, so to say, a period of relief and repose, to which even antagonists were not insensible. No man ever understood the advantage of his gifts in this way better than Upton, nor ever was there one who could convert the powers which fascinated society into the means of controlling a popular assembly, with greater

assurance of success. He was a man of a strictly logical mind, a close and acute thinker; he was of a highly imaginative temperament, rich in all the resources of a poetic fancy; he was thoroughly well read, and gifted with a ready memory; but, above all these—transcendently above them all—he was a "a man of the world;" and no one, either in Parliament or out of it, knew so well when it was wrong to say "the right thing." But let us resume our quotation:

"For more than three hours did the House listen with breathless attention to a narrative which in no parliamentary experience has been surpassed for the lucid clearness of its details, the unbroken flow of its relation. The orator up to this time had strictly devoted himself to explanation; he now proceeded to what might be called reply. If the House was charmed and instructed before, it was now positively astonished and electrified by the overwhelming force of the

speaker's raillery and invective. Not satisfied with showing the evil consequences that must ensue from any adoption of the measures recommended by the opposition, he proceeded to exhibit the insufficiency of views always based upon false information.

"'We have been taunted,' said he, 'with the charge of fomenting discords in foreign lands; we have been arraigned as disturbers of the world's peace, and called the firebrands of Europe; we are exhibited as parading the Continent with a more than Quixotic ardour—since we seek less the redress of wrong than the opportunity to display our own powers of interference—that quality, which the learned gentleman has significantly stigmatised as a spirit of meddling impertinence, offensive to the whole world of civilisation. Let me tell him, sir, that the very debate of this night has elicited, and from himself, too, the very outrages he has had the temerity to ascribe to us. His has

been this indiscriminate ardour, his, this unjudging rashness, his, this meddling impertinence (I am but quoting, not inventing, a phrase) by which, without accurate, without, indeed, any information, he has ventured to charge the Government with what no administration would be guilty of—a cool and deliberate violation of the national law of Europe.

"'He has told you, sir, that in our eagerness to distinguish ourselves as universal redressers of injury, we have "ferreted out"—I take his own polished expression—the case of an obscure boy in an obscure corner of Italy, converted a common-place and very vulgar incident into a tale of interest, and by a series of artful devices and insinuations based upon this narrative a grave and insulting charge upon one of the oldest of our allies. He has alleged that throughout the whole of those proceedings we had not the shadow of pretence for our interference;

that the acts imputed occurred in a land over which we had no control, and in the person of an individual in whom we had no interest. That this Sebastiano Greppi—this image boy—for so with a courteous pleasantry he has called him—was a Neapolitan subject, the affiliated envoy of I know not what number of secret societies; that his sculptural pretensions were but pretexts to conceal his real avocations—the agency of a bloodthirsty faction; that his crime was no less than an act of high treason, and that Austrian gentleness and mercy were never more conspicuously illustrated than in the commutation of a death sentence to one of perpetual imprisonment.

"'What a rude task is mine, when I must say that for even one of these assertions there is not the slightest foundation in fact. Greppi's offence was not a crime against the state; as little was it committed within the limits of the Austrian territory. He is not

the envoy, or even a member of any revolutionary club; he never—I am speaking with knowledge, sir—he never mingled in the schemes of plotting politicians; as far removed is he from sympathy with such men, as, in the genius of a great artist, is he elevated above the humble path to which the learned gentleman's raillery would sentence him. For the character of "an image vendor," the learned gentleman must look nearer home; and lastly, this youth is an Englishman, born of a race and a blood that need feel no shame in comparison with any I see around me!'

"To the loud cry of 'Name, name,' which now arose, Sir Horace replied: 'If I do not announce the name at this moment, it is because there are circumstances in the history of the youth to which publicity would give irreparable pain. These are details which I have no right to bring under discussion, and which must inevitably thus

become matters of town-talk. To any gentleman of the opposite side who may desire to verify the assertions I have made to the House, I would, under pledge of secrecy, reveal the name. I would do more; I would permit him to confide it to a select number of friends equally pledged with himself. This is surely enough ?' "

We have no occasion to continue our quotation further, and we take up our history as Sir Horace, overwhelmed by the warmest praises and congratulations, drove off from the House to his home. Amid all the excitement and enthusiasm which this brilliant success produced among the ministerialists, there was a kind of dread lest the over-taxed powers of the orator should pay the heavy penalty of such an effort. They had all heard how he came from a sick chamber; they had all seen him, trembling, faint, and almost voiceless as he stole up to his place, and they began to fear lest they had, in the

hot zeal of party, imperilled the ablest chief in their ranks.

What a relief to these agonies had it been, could they have seen Upton as he once more gained the solitude of his chamber, where, divested of all the restraints of an audience, he walked leisurely up and down, smoking a cigar, and occasionally smiling pleasantly as some "conceit" crossed his mind.

Had there been any one to mark him there, it is more than likely that he would have regarded him as a man revelling in the after-thought of a great success—one who, having come gloriously through the combat, was triumphantly recalling to his memory every incident of the fight. How little had they understood Sir Horace Upton who would have read him in this wise! That daring and soaring nature rarely dallied in the past; even the present was scarcely full enough for the craving of a spirit that cried ever "Forward."

What might be made of that night's success—how best it should be turned to account!—these were the thoughts which beset him, and many were the devices which his subtlety hit on to this end. There was not a goal his ambition could point to, but which came associated with some deteriorating ingredient. He was tired of the Continent, he hated England, he shuddered at the Colonies. "India, perhaps," said he, hesitatingly—"India, perhaps, might do." To continue as he was—to remain in office, as having reached the topmost rung of the ladder—would have been insupportable indeed; and yet how, without longer service at his post, could any man claim a higher reward?

CHAPTER V.

THE SUBTLETIES OF STATECRAFT.

It was not till Sir Horace had smoked his third cigar that he seated himself at his writing-table. He then wrote rapidly a brief note, of which he proceeded to make a careful copy. This he folded and placed in an envelope, addressing it to His Grace the Duke of Cloudeslie.

A few minutes afterwards he began to prepare for bed. The day was already breaking, and yet that sick man was unwearied and unwasted—not a trace of fatigue on features that, under the infliction of

a tiresome dinner-party, would have seemed bereft of hope.

The tied-up knocker—the straw-strewn street—the closely-drawn curtains announced to London the next morning that the distinguished minister was seriously ill; and from an early hour the tide of inquirers, in carriages and on foot, passed silently along that dreary way. High and mighty were the names inscribed in the porter's book; royal dukes had called in person, and never was public solicitude more widely manifested. There is something very flattering in the thought of a great intelligence being damaged and endangered in our service! With all its melancholy influences, there is a feeling of importance suggested by the idea, that for us and our interests a man of commanding powers should have jeopardied his life. There is a very general prejudice, not alone in obtaining the best article for our money, but the most of it also; and this

sentiment extends to the individuals employed in the public service; and it is, doubtless, a very consolatory reflection to the tax-paying classes, that the great functionaries of state are not indolent recipients of princely incomes, but hard-worked men of office—up late and early at their duties—prematurely old, and worn out before their time! Something of this same feeling inspires much of the sympathy displayed for a sick statesman—a sentiment not altogether void of a certain misgiving that we have probably over-taxed the energies employed in our behalf.

Scarcely one in a hundred of those who now called and "left their names," had ever seen Sir Horace Upton in their lives. Few are more removed from public knowledge than the men who fill even the highest places in our diplomacy. He was, therefore, to the mass a mere name. Since his accession to office little or nothing had been

heard of him, and of that little, the greater part was made up of sneering allusions to his habits of indolence; impertinent hints about his caprices and his tastes. Yet now, by a grand effort in the "House," and a well-got-up report of a dangerous illness the day after, was he the most marked man in all the state—the theme of solicitude throughout two millions of people!

There was a dash of mystery, too, in the whole incident, which heightened its flavour for public taste—a vague, indistinct impression—it did not even amount to rumour—was abroad, that Sir Horace had not been "fairly treated" by his colleagues; either that they could, if they wished it, have defended the cause themselves, or that they had needlessly called him from a sick bed to come to the rescue, or that some subtle trap had been laid to ensnare him. These were vulgar beliefs, which, if they obtained little credence in the higher region of club-life,

were extensively circulated, and not discredited, in less distinguished circles. How they ever got abroad at all—how they found their way into newspaper paragraphs, terrifying timid supporters of the ministry, by the dread prospect of a "smash"—exciting the hopes of opposition with the notion of a great secession—throwing broadcast before the world of readers every species of speculation—all kinds of combination—who knows how all this happened? Who, indeed, ever knew how things a thousand times more secret ever got wind and became club-talk ere the actors in the events had finished an afternoon's canter in the Park?

If, then, the world of London learned on the morning in question that Sir Horace Upton was very ill, it also surmised—why and wherefore it knows best—that the same Sir Horace was an ill-used man. Now, of all the objects of public sympathy and interest,

next after a foreign emperor on a visit at Buckingham Palace, or a newly arrived hippopotamus at the Zoological Gardens, there is nothing your British public is so fond of—as "an ill-used man." It is essential, however, to his great success, that he be ill-used in high places; that his enemies and calumniators should have been, if not princes, at least dukes and marquises, and great dignitaries of the state. Let him only be supposed to be martyred by these, and there is no saying where his popularity may be carried. A very general impression is current, that the mass of the nation is more or less "ill-used"—denied its natural claims and just rewards. To hit upon, therefore, a good representation of this hard usage, to find a tangible embodiment of this great injustice, is a discovery that is never unappreciated.

To read his speech of the night before, and to peruse the ill-scrawled bulletin of his health at the hall-door in the morning, made

up the measure of his popularity, and the world exclaimed, "Think of the man they have treated in this fashion!" Every one framed the indictment to his own taste; nor was the wrong the less grievous, that none could give it a name. Even cautious men fell into the trap, and were heard to say, "If all we hear be true, Upton has not been fairly treated."

What an air of confirmation to all these rumours did it give, when the evening papers announced in the most striking type—RESIGNATION OF SIR HORACE UPTON. If the terms in which he communicated that step to the Premier were not before the world, the date, the very night of the debate, showed that the resolution had been come to suddenly.

Some of the journals affected to be in the whole secret of the transaction, and only waiting the opportune moment to announce it to the world. The dark, mysterious para-

graphs in which journalists show their no-meanings abounded, and menacing hints were thrown out that the country would no longer submit to—Heaven knows what. There was, besides all this, a very considerable amount of that catechetical inquiry, which, by suggesting a number of improbabilities, hopes to arrive at the likely, and thus, by asking questions where they had a perfect confidence they would never be answered, they seemed to overwhelm their adversaries with shame and discomfiture. The great fact, however, was indisputable—Upton had resigned.

To the many who looked up at the shuttered windows of his sad-looking London house, this reflection occurred naturally enough—How little the poor sufferer, on his sick bed, cared for the contest that raged around him; how far away were, in all probability, his thoughts from that world of striving and ambition whose waves came

even to his door-sills. Let us, in that privilege which belongs to us, take a peep within the curtained room, where a bright fire is blazing, and where, seated behind a screen, Sir Horace is now penning a note; a bland half smile rippling his features as some pleasant conceit has flashed across his mind. We have rarely seen him looking so well. The stimulating events of the last few days have done for him more than all the counsels of his doctors, and his eyes are brighter and his cheeks fuller than usual. A small miniature hangs suspended by a narrow ribbon round his neck, and a massive gold bracelet adorns one wrist; "two souvenirs," which he stops to contemplate as he writes, nor is there a touch of sorrowful meaning in the glance he bestows upon them—the look rather seems the self-complacent regard that a successful general might bestow on the decorations he had won by his valour. It is essentially vainglorious.

More than once has he paused to read over the sentence he has written, and one may see, by the motion of his lips as he reads, how completely he has achieved the sentiment he would express. "Yes, charming Princess," said he, perusing the lines before him, "I've once more to throw myself at your feet, and reiterate the assurances of a devotion which has formed the happiness of my existence."—"That does not sound quite French after all," muttered he—"better perhaps—has formed the religion of my heart."—"I know you will reproach my precipitancy; I feel how your judgment, unerring as it ever is, will condemn what may seem a sudden ebullition of temper; but, I ask, is this amongst the catalogue of my weaknesses? Am I of that clay which is always fissured when heated? No. *You* know me better—*you* alone of all the world have the clue to a heart whose affections are all your own. The few explanations of all that has

happened must be reserved for our meeting. Of course, neither the newspapers nor the reviews have any conception of the truth. Four words will set your heart at ease, and these you must have: 'I have done wisely;' with that assurance you have no more to fear. I mean to leave this in all secrecy by the end of the week. I shall go over to Brussels, where you can address me under the name of Richard Bingham. I shall only remain there to watch events for a day or two, and thence on to Geneva.

"I am quite charmed with your account of poor Lady G——, though as I read, I can detect how all the fascinations you tell of were but reflected glories. Your view of her situation is admirable, and by your skilful tactique, it is she herself that ostracises the society that would only have accepted her on sufferance. How true is your remark as to the great question at issue—not her guilt or innocence, but what danger might

accrue to others from infractions that invite publicity. The cabinet were discussing t'other day a measure by which sales of estated property could be legalised without those tiresome and costly researches into title, which in a country where confiscations were frequent became at last endless labour. Don't you think that some such measure might be beneficially adopted as regards female character? Could there not be invented a species of social guarantee, which, rejecting all investigation into bygones after a certain limit, would confer a valid title that none might dispute?

"Lawyers tell us that no man's property would stand the test of a search for title. Are we quite certain how far the other sex are our betters in this respect; and might it not be wise to interpose a limit beyond which research need not proceed?

"I concur in all you say about G—— himself. He was always looking for better

security than he needed—a great mistake, whether the investment consist of our affections or our money. Physicians say that if any man could only see the delicate anatomy on which his life depends, and watch the play of those organs that sustain him, he would not have courage to move a step, or utter a loud word. Might we not carry the analogy into morals, and ask, is it safe or prudent in us to investigate too deeply? are we wise in dissecting motives? or would it not be better to enjoy our moral as we do our material health, without seeking to assure ourselves further?

"Besides all this, the untravelled Englishman—and such was Glencore when he married—never can be brought to understand the harmless levities of foreign life. Like a fresh-water sailor, he always fancies the boat is going to upset, and he throws himself out at the first 'jobble!' I own to you frankly, I never knew the case in question; 'how far

she went,' is a secret to me. I might have heard the whole story. It required some address in me to escape it, but I do detest these narrations where truth is marred by passion, and all just inferences confused and confounded with vague and absurd suspicions.

"Glencore's conduct throughout was little short of insanity; like a man who, hearing his banker is insecure, takes refuge in insolvency, he ruins himself to escape embarrassment. They tell me here that the shock has completely deranged his intellect, and that he lives a life of melancholy isolation in that old castle in Ireland.

"How few men in this world can count the cost of their actions, and make up that simple calculation, 'How much shall I have to pay for it?'

"Take any view one pleases of the case, would it not have been better for him to have remained in the world and of it?

Would not its pleasures, even its cares, have proved better 'distractions,' than his own brooding thoughts? If a man have a secret ailment, does he parade it in public? Why, then, this exposure of a pain for which there is no sympathy?

"Life, after all, is only a system of compensations. Wish it to be whatever you please, but accept it as it really is, and make the best of it! For my own part, I have ever felt like one who, having got a most disastrous account of a road he was about to travel, is delightfully surprised to find the way better and the inns more comfortable than he looked for. In the main, men and women are very good—our mistake is, expecting to find people always in our own humour. Now, if one is very rich, this is practical enough, but the mass must be content to encounter disparity of mood and difference of taste at every step. There is,

therefore, some tact required in conforming to these 'irregularities,' and unhappily everybody has not got tact.

"You, charming Princess, have tact; but you have beauty, wit, fascination, rank—all that can grace high station, and all that high station can reflect upon great natural gifts; that *you* should see the world through a rose-tinted medium is a very condition of your identity; and there is truth as well as good philosophy in this view! You have often told me that if people were not exactly all that strict moralists might wish, yet that they made up a society very pleasant and livable withal, and that there was always a floating capital of kindness and good feeling quite sufficient to trade upon, and even grow richer by negotiating!

"People who live out of the world, or, what comes to the same thing, in a little world of their own, are ever craving after

perfectability, just as, in time of peace, nations only accept in their armies six-foot grenadiers, and gigantic dragoons. Let the pressure of war or emergency arise, however, or, in other words, let there be the real business of life to be done, then the standard is lowered at once, and the battle is fought and won by very inferior agency. Now, show troops and show qualities are very much alike; they are a measure of what would be very charming to arrive at, were it only practicable! Oh! that poor Glencore had only learned this lesson, instead of writing nonsense verses at Eton!

"The murky domesticities of England have no correlatives in the sunny enjoyments of Italian life; and John Bull has got a fancy that virtue is only cultivated where there are coal fires, stuff curtains, and a window tax. Why, then, in the name of Doctors' Commons! does he marry a foreigner?"

Just as Upton had written these words, his servant presented him with a visiting-card.

"Lord Glencore!" exclaimed he aloud. "When was he here?"

"His lordship is below stairs now, sir. He said he was sure you'd see him."

"Of course; show him up at once. Wait a moment; give me that cane, place those cushions for my feet, draw the curtain, and leave the aconite and ether drops near me—that will do, thank you."

Some minutes elapsed ere the door was opened; the slow footfall of one ascending the stairs, step by step, was heard, accompanied by the laboured respiration of a man breathing heavily, and then Lord Glencore entered, his form worn and emaciated, and his face pale and colourless. With a feeble, uncertain voice, he said,

"I knew you'd see me, Upton, and I

wouldn't go away!" And with this he sank into a chair and sighed deeply.

"Of course, my dear Glencore, you knew it," said the other, feelingly, for he was shocked by the wretched spectacle before him; "even were I more seriously indisposed than——"

"And were you really ill, Upton?" asked Glencore, with a weakly smile.

"Can you ask the question? Have you not seen the evening papers—read the announcement on my door—seen the troops of inquirers in the streets?"

"Yes," sighed he, wearily, "I have heard and seen all you say, and yet I bethought me of a remark I once heard from the Duke of Orleans: 'Monsieur Upton is a most active minister when his health permits; and when it does not, he is the most mischievous intriguant in Europe.'"

"He was always straining at an antithesis;

he fancied he could talk like St. Simon, and it really spoiled a very pleasant converser."

"And so you have been very ill," said Glencore, slowly, and as though he had not heeded the last remark; "so have I also!"

"You seem to me too feeble to be about, Glencore," said Upton, kindly.

"I am so, if it were of any consequence—I mean if my life could interest or benefit any one. My head, however, will bear solitude no longer; I must have some one to talk to; I mean to travel; I will leave this in a day or so."

"Come along with me, then; my plan is to make for Brussels, but it must not be spoken of, as I want to watch events there before I remove farther from England."

"So it is all true, then; you have resigned?" said Glencore.

"Perfectly true."

"What a strange step to take. I remem-

ber more than twenty years ago your telling me that you'd rather be Foreign Secretary of England than the monarch of any third-rate Continental kingdom."

"I thought so then, and what is more singular, I think so still."

"And you throw it up at the very moment people are proclaiming your success!"

"You shall hear all my reasons, Glencore, for this resolution, and will, I feel assured, approve of them; but they'd only weary you now."

"Let me know them now, Upton; it is such a relief to me when, even by a momentary interest in anything, I am able to withdraw this poor tired brain from its own distressing thoughts." He spoke these words not only with strong feeling, but even imparted to them a tone of entreaty, so that Upton could not but comply.

"When I wished for the Secretaryship, my dear Glencore," said he, "I fancied

the office as it used to be in olden times, when one played the great game of diplomacy, with kings and ministers for antagonists, and the world at large for spectators; when consummate skill and perfect secrecy were objects of moment, and where grand combinations rewarded one's labour with all the certainty of a mathematical problem. Every move on the board could be calculated beforehand, no disturbing influences could derange plans that never were divulged till they were accomplished. All that is past and gone; our Constitution, grown every day more and more democratic, rules by the House of Commons. Questions, whose treatment demand all the skill of a statesman, and all the address of a man of the world, come to be discussed in open Parliament; correspondence is called for, despatches and even private notes are produced; and, while the State you are opposed to revels in the security of secrecy, *your*

whole game is revealed to the world in the shape of a Blue Book.

"Nor is this all—the debaters on these nice and intricate questions, involving the most far-reaching speculation of statesmanship, are men of trade and enterprise, who view every international difficulty only in its relation to their peculiar interests. National greatness, honour, and security are nothing—the maintenance of that equipoise which preserves peace is nothing—the nice management which, by the exhibition of courtesy here, or of force there, is nothing compared to alliances that secure us ample supplies of raw material, and abundant markets for manufactures. Diplomacy has come to this!"

"But you must have known all this before you accepted office; you had seen where the course of events led to, and were aware that the House ruled the country."

"Perhaps I did not recognise the fact to its full extent. Perhaps I fancied I could

succeed in modifying the system," said Upton, cautiously.

"A hopeless undertaking!" said Glencore.

"I'm not quite so certain of that," said Upton, pausing for a while as he seemed to reflect. When he resumed, it was in a lighter and more flippant tone: "To make short of it, I saw that I could not keep office on these conditions, but I did not choose to go out as a beaten man. For my pride's sake I desired that my reasons should be reserved for myself alone—for my actual benefit it was necessary that I should have a hold over my colleagues in office. These two conditions were rather difficult to combine, but I accomplished them.

"I had interested the King so much in my views as to what the Foreign Office ought to be, that an interchange of letters took place, and his Majesty imparted to me his fullest confidence in disparagement of the present system. This correspondence was

a perfect secret to the whole Cabinet, but when it had arrived at a most confidential crisis, I suggested to the King that Cloudeslie should be consulted. I knew well that this would set the match to the train. No sooner did Cloudeslie learn that such a correspondence had been carried on for months without his knowledge, views stated, plans promulgated, and the King's pleasure taken on questions not one of which should have been broached without his approval and concurrence, than he declared he would not hold the seals of office another hour. The King, well knowing his temper, and aware what a terrific exposure might come of it, sent for me, and asked what was to be done. I immediately suggested my own resignation a sacrifice to the difficulty and to the wounded feelings of the Duke. Thus did I achieve what I sought for. I imposed a heavy obligation on the King and the Premier, and

I have secured secrecy as to my motives, which none will ever betray.

"I only remained for the debate of the other night, for I wanted a little public enthusiasm to mark the fall of the curtain."

"So that you still hold them as your debtors?" asked Glencore.

"Without doubt, I do; my claim is a heavy one."

"And what would satisfy it?"

"If my health would stand England," said Upton, leisurely, "I'd take a peerage; but as this murky atmosphere would suffocate me, and as I don't care for the latter without the political privileges, I have determined to have the 'Garter.'"

"The Garter! a blue ribbon!" exclaimed Glencore, as though the insufferable coolness with which the pretension was announced might justify any show of astonishment.

"Yes; I had some thoughts of India, but

the journey deters me; in fact, as I have enough to live on, I'd rather devote the remainder of my days to rest, and the care of this shattered constitution." It is impossible to convey to the reader the tender and affectionate compassion with which Sir Horace seemed to address these last words to himself.

"Do you ever look upon yourself as the luckiest fellow in Europe, Upton?" asked Glencore.

"No," sighed he; "I occasionally fancy I have been hardly dealt with by fortune. I have only to throw my eyes around me, and see a score of men, richer and more elevated than myself, not one of whom has capacity for even a third-rate task, so that really the self-congratulation you speak of has not occurred to me."

"But, after all, you have had a most successful career——"

"Look at the matter this way, Glencore; there are about six—say six men in all Europe—who have a little more common sense than all the rest of the world—I could tell you the names of five of them." If there was a supreme boastfulness in the speech, the modest delivery of it completely mystified the hearer, and he sat gazing with wonderment at the man before him.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME SAD REVERIES.

"HAVE you any plans, Glencore?" asked Upton, as they posted along towards Dover.

"None," was the brief reply.

"Nor any destination you desire to reach?"

"Just as little."

"Such a state as yours, then, I take it, is about the best thing going in life. Every move one makes is attended with so many adverse considerations—every goal so separated from us by unforeseen difficulties—that an existence, even without what is called an object, has certain great advantages."

"I am curious to hear them," said the other, half cynically.

"For myself," said Upton, not accepting the challenge, "the brief intervals of comparative happiness I have enjoyed have been in periods when complete repose, almost torpor, has surrounded me, and when the mere existence of the day has engaged my thoughts."

"What became of memory all this while!"

"Memory!" said Upton, laughing, "I hold my memory in proper subjection. It no more dares obtrude upon me uncalled for, than would my valet come into my room till I ring for him. Of the slavery men endure from their own faculties I have no experience."

"And, of course, no sympathy for them."

"I will not say that I cannot compassionate sufferings though I have not felt them."

"Are you quite sure of that?" asked Glencore, almost sternly; "is not your very pity a kind of contemptuous sentiment towards those who sorrow without reason—the strong

man's estimate of the weak man's sufferings? Believe me there is no true condolence where there is not the same experience of woe!"

"I should be sorry to lay down so narrow a limit to fellow-feeling," said Upton.

"You told me a few moments back," said Glencore, "that your memory was your slave. How, then, can you feel for one like me, whose memory is his master? How understand a path that never wanders out of the shadow of the past?"

There was such an accent of sorrow impressed upon these words, that Upton did not desire to prolong a discussion so painful; and thus, for the remainder of the way, little was interchanged between them. They crossed the strait by night, and as Upton stole upon deck after dusk, he found Glencore seated near the wheel, gazing intently at the lights on shore from which they were fast receding.

"I am taking my last look at England, Upton," said he, affecting a tone of easy indifference.

"You surely mean to go back again one of these days?" said Upton.

"Never, never!" said he, solemnly. "I have made all my arrangements for the future—every disposition regarding my property—I have neglected nothing, so far as I know, of those claims which, in the shape of relationship, the world has such reverence for; and now I bethink me of myself. I shall have to consult you, however, about this boy," said he, faltering in the words. "The objection I once entertained to his bearing my name exists no longer, he may call himself Massy, if he will. The chances are," added he, in a lower and more feeling voice, "that he rejects a name that will only remind him of a wrong!"

"My dear Glencore," said Upton, with real tenderness, "do I apprehend you aright?

Are you, at last, convinced that you have been unjust? Has the moment come in which your better judgment rises above the evil counsels of prejudice and passion——?"

"Do you mean, am I assured of her innocence?" broke in Glencore, wildly. "Do you imagine if I were so, that I could withhold my hand from taking a life so infamous and dishonoured as mine! The world would have no parallel for such a wretch! Mark me, Upton!" cried he, fiercely, "there is no torture I have yet endured would equal the bare possibility of what you hint at."

"Good Heavens! Glencore, do not let me suppose that selfishness has so marred and disfigured your nature that this is true! Bethink you of what you say—would it not be the crowning glory of your life to repair a dreadful wrong, and acknowledge before the world that the fame you had aspersed was without stain or spot?"

"And with what grace should I ask the

world to believe me? Is it when expiating the shame of a falsehood, that I should call upon men to accept me as truthful? Have I not proclaimed her, from one end of Europe to the other, dishonoured? If *she* be absolved, what becomes of *me?*"

"This is unworthy of you, Glencore," said Upton, severely; "nor, if illness and long suffering had not impaired your judgment, had you ever spoken such words. I say once more, that if the day came that you could declare to the world that her fame had no other reproach than the injustice of your own unfounded jealousy, that day would be the best and the proudest of your life."

"The proud day that published me a calumniator of all that I was most pledged to defend—the deliberate liar against the obligation of the holiest of all contracts! You forget, Upton—but I do not forget—that it was by this very argument you once tried to dissuade me from my act of ven-

geance. You told me—ay, in words that still ring in my ears—to remember that if by any accident or chance her innocence might be proven, that I could never avail myself of the vindication without first declaring my own unworthiness to profit by it—that if the Wife stood forth in all the pride of purity, the Husband would be a scoff and a shame throughout the world!"

"When I said so," said Upton, "it was to turn you from a path that could not but lead to ruin; I endeavoured to deter you by an appeal that interested even your selfishness."

"Your subtlety has outwitted itself, Upton," said Glencore, with a bitter irony; "it is not the first instance on record where blank cartridge has proved fatal!"

"One thing is perfectly clear," said Upton, boldly, "the man who shrinks from the repair of a wrong he has done, on the consideration of how it would affect himself and

his own interests, shows that he cares more for the outward show of honour, than its real and sustaining power."

"And will you tell me, Upton, that the world's estimate of a man's fame is not essential to his self-esteem, or that there yet lived one who could brave obloquy, without, by the force of something within him?"

"This I will tell you," replied Upton, "that he who balances between the two is scarcely an honest man; and that he who accepts the show for the substance is not a wise one."

"These are marvellous sentiments to hear from one whose craft has risen to a proverb, and whose address in life is believed to be not his meanest gift."

"I accept the irony in all good humour; I go further, Glencore, I stoop to explain. When any one in the great and eventful journey of life seeks to guide himself safely, he has to weigh all the considerations, and

calculate all the combinations adverse to him. The straight road is rarely, or never, possible; even if events were, which they are not, easy to read, they must be taken in combination with others, and with their consequences. The path of action becomes necessarily devious and winding, and compromises are called for at every step. It is not in the moment of shipwreck that a man stops to inquire into petty details of the articles he throws into the long-boat; he is bent on saving himself as best he can. He seizes what is next him, if it suit his purpose. Now were he to act in this manner in all the quiet security of his life on shore, his conduct would be highly blamable. No emergency would warrant his taking what belonged to another—no critical moment would drive him to the instinct of self-preservation. Just the same is the interval between action and reflection. Give me

time and forethought, and I will employ something better and higher than craft. My subtlety, as you like to call it, is not my best weapon; I only use it in emergency."

"I read the matter differently," said Glencore, sulkily; "I could, perhaps, offer another explanation of your practice."

"Pray, let me hear it; we are in all confidence here, and I promise you I will not take badly whatever you say to me."

Glencore sat silent and motionless.

"Come, shall I say it for you, Glencore? for I think I know what is passing in your mind."

The other nodded, and he went on:

"You would tell me, in plain words, that I keep my craft for myself; my high principle for my friends."

Glencore only smiled, but Upton continued:

"So, then, I have guessed aright; and the

very worst you can allege against this course is, that what I bestow is better than what I retain!"

"One of Solomon's proverbs may be better than a shilling; but which would a hungry man rather have? I want no word-fencing, Upton, still less do I seek what might sow distrust between us. This much, however, has life taught me—the great trials of this world are like its great maladies, Providence has meant them to be fatal; we call in the doctor in the one case, or the counsellor in the other, out of habit rather than out of hope. Our own consciousness has already whispered that nothing can be of use, but we like to do as our neighbours, and so, we take remedies and follow injunctions to the last. The wise man quickly detects, by the character of the means, how emergent is the case believed to be, and rightly judges that recourse to violent measures implies the presence of great peril. If

he be really wise, then he desists at once from what can only torture his few remaining hours. They can be given to better things than the agonies of such agency. To this exact point has my case come, and by the counsels you have given me do I read my danger! Your only remedy is as bad as the malady it is meant to cure! I cannot take it!"

"Accepting your own imagery, I would say," said Upton, "that you are one who will not submit to an operation of some pain that he might be cured."

Glencore sat moodily for some moments without speaking; at last he said,

"I feel as though continual change of place and scene would be a relief to me. Let us rendezvous, therefore, somewhere for the autumn, and meanwhile I'll wander about alone."

"What direction do you purpose to take?"

"The Schwartz Wald and the Höhlenthal,

first. I want to revisit a place I knew in happier days. Memory must surely have something besides sorrows to render us. I owned a little cottage there once, near Steig. I fished and read Uhland for a summer long. I wonder if I could resume the same life. I knew the whole village—the blacksmith, the schoolmaster, the Dorf-richter—all of them. Good, kind souls they were—how they wept when we parted! Nothing consoled them but my having purchased the cottage, and promised to come back again!"

Upton was glad to accept even this much of interest in the events of life, and drew Glencore on to talk of the days he had passed in this solitary region.

As in the dreariest landscape a ray of sunlight will reveal some beautiful effects, making the eddies of the dark pool to glitter, lighting up the russet moss, and giving to the half-dried lichen a tinge of

bright colour, so will, occasionally, memory throw over a life of sorrow a gleam of happier meaning. Faces and events, forms and accents, that once found the way to our hearts, come back again, faintly and imperfectly it may be, but with a touch that revives in us what we once were. It is the one sole feature in which self-love becomes amiable, when, looking back on our past, we cherish the thought of a time before the world had made us sceptical and hard-hearted!

Glencore warmed as he told of that tranquil period when poetry gave a colour to his life, and the wild conceptions of genius ran like a thread of gold through the whole web of existence. He quoted passages that had struck him for their beauty or their truthfulness; he told how he had tried to allure his own mind to the tone that vibrated in "the magic music of verse," and how the very

attempt had inspired him with gentler thoughts, a softer charity, and a more tender benevolence towards his fellows.

"Tieck is right, Upton, when he says there are two natures in us, distinct and apart—one, the imaginative and ideal; the other, the actual and the sensual. Many shake them together and confound them, making of the incongruous mixture that vile compound of inconsistency, where the beautiful and the true are ever warring with the deformed and the false; their lives a long struggle with themselves, a perpetual contest between high hope and base enjoyment. A few keep them apart, retaining, through their worldliness, some hallowed spot in the heart, where ignoble desires and mean aspirations have never dared to come. A fewer still have made the active work of life subordinate to the guiding spirit of purity, adventuring on no road unsanctioned by high and holy thoughts, caring for no am-

bitions but such as make us nobler and better!

"I once had a thought of such life; and even the memory of it, like the prayers we have learned in our childhood, has a hallowing influence over after years. If that poor boy, Upton,"—and his lips trembled on the words,—"if that poor boy could have been brought up thus humbly! If he had been taught to know no more than an existence of such simplicity called for, what a load of care might it have spared *his* heart and *mine!*"

"You have read over those letters I gave you about him?" asked Upton, who eagerly availed himself of the opportunity to approach an almost forbidden theme.

"I have read them over and over," said Glencore, sadly; "in all the mention of him I read the faults of my own nature—a stubborn spirit of pride, that hardens as much as elevates; a resentful temper, too prone to

give way to its own impulses; an over-confidence in himself, too, always ready to revenge its defeats on the world about him. These are his defects, and they are mine. Poor fellow, that he should inherit all that I have of bad, and yet not be heir to the accidents of fortune which make others so lenient to faults!"

If Upton heard these words with much interest, no less was he struck by the fact that Glencore made no inquiry whatever as to the youth's fate. The last letter of the packet revealed the story of an eventful duel and the boy's escape from Massa by night, with his subsequent arrest by the police; and yet in the face of incidents like these he continued to speculate on traits of mind and character, nor even adverted to the more closely-touching events of his fate. By many an artful hint and ingenious device did Sir Horace try to tempt him to some show of curiosity, but all were fruitless.

Glencore would talk freely and willingly of the boy's disposition and his capacity; he would even speculate on the successes and failures such a temperament might meet with in life; but still he spoke as men might speak of a character in a fiction, ingeniously weighing casualties and discussing chances; never, even by accident, approaching the actual story of his life, or seeming to attach any interest to his destiny.

Upton's shrewd intelligence quickly told him that this reserve was not accidental, and he deliberated within himself how far it were safe to invade it.

At length he resumed the attempt by adroitly alluding to the spirited resistance the boy had made to his capture, and the consequences one might naturally enough ascribe to a proud and high-hearted youth thus tyrannically punished.

"I have heard something," said Upton, "of the severities practised at Kuffstein, and

they recal the horrible tales of the Inquisition—the terrible contrivances to extort confessions — expedients that often break down the intellect whose secrets they would discover—so that one actually shudders at the name of a spot so associated with evil."

Glencore placed his hands over his face, but did not utter a word; and again Upton went on urging, by every device he could think of, some indication that might mean interest, if not anxiety, when suddenly he felt Glencore's hand grasp his arm with violence.

"No more of this, Upton," cried he, sternly; "you do not know the torture you are giving me." There was a long and painful pause between them, at the end of which Glencore spoke, but it was in a voice scarcely above a whisper, and every accent of which trembled with emotion. "You remember one sad and memorable night, Upton, in that old castle in Ireland—the night when I

came to the resolution of this vengeance!—I sent for the boy to my room; we were alone there together, face to face. It was such a scene as could brook no witness, nor dare I now recal its details as they occurred. He came in frankly and boldly, as he felt he had a right to do. How he left that room—cowed, abashed, and degraded—I have yet before me. Our meeting did not exceed many minutes in duration—neither of us could have endured it longer. Brief as it was, we ratified a compact between us—it was this—neither was ever to question or inquire after the other, as no tie should unite, no interest should bind us. Had you seen him then, Upton," cried Glencore, wildly, "the proud disdain with which he listened to my attempts at excuse, the haughty distance with which he seemed to reject every thought of complaint, the stern coldness with which he heard me plan out his future, you would have said that some curse had fallen

upon my heart, or it could never have been dead to traits which proclaimed him to be my own. In that moment it was my lot to be like him who held out his own right hand to be first burned, ere he gave his body to the flames.

"We parted without an embrace—not even a farewell was spoken between us. While I gloried in his pride, had he but yielded ever so little, had one syllable of weakness, one tear escaped him, I had given up my project, reversed all my planned vengeance, and taken him to my heart as my own. But no! He was resolved on proving by his nature that he was of that stern race, from which, by a falsehood, I was about to exclude him. It was as though my own blood hurled a proud defiance to me.

"As he walked slowly to the door, his glove fell from his hand. I stealthily caught it up. I wanted to keep it as a memorial of

that bitter hour; but he turned hastily around and plucked it from my hand. The action was even a rude one; and with a mocking smile, as though he read my meaning and despised it, he departed.

"You now have heard the last secret of my heart in this sad history. Let us speak of it no more." And with this Glencore arose and left the deck.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FLOOD IN THE MAGRA.

When it rains in Italy it does so with a passionate ardour that bespeaks an unusual pleasure. It is no "soft dissolving in tears," but a perfect outburst of woe—wailing in accents the very wildest, and deluging the land in torrents. Mountain streams that were rivulets in the morning, before noon arrives are great rivers, swollen and turbid, carrying away massive rocks from their foundations, and tearing up large trees by the roots. The dried-up stony bed you have crossed a couple of hours back with unwetted feet, is now the course of a stream that would defy the boldest.

These sudden changes are remarkably frequent along that beautiful tract between Nice and Massa, and which is known as the "Riviera di Levante." The rivers, fed from innumerable streams that pour down from the Apennines, are almost instantaneously swollen; and as their bed continually slopes towards the sea, the course of the waters is one of headlong velocity. Of these the most dangerous by far is the Magra. The river, which even in dry seasons is a considerable stream, becomes, when fed by its tributaries, a very formidable body of water, stretching full a mile in width, and occasionally spreading a vast sheet of foam close to the very outskirts of Sarzana. The passage of the river is all the more dangerous at these periods as it approaches the sea, and more than one instance is recorded where the stout raft, devoted to the use of travellers, has been carried away to the ocean.

Where the great post-road from Genoa to the south passes, a miserable shealing stands, half hidden in tall osiers, and surrounded with a sedgy, swampy soil the foot sinks in at every step. This is the shelter of the boatmen who navigate the raft, and who, in relays by day and night, are in waiting for the service of travellers. In the dreary days of winter, or in the drearier nights, it is scarcely possible to imagine a more hopeless spot; deep in the midst of a low marshy tract, the especial home of tertian fever, with the wild stream roaring at the very door-sill, and the thunder of the angry ocean near, it is indeed all that one can picture of desolation and wretchedness. Nor do the living features of the scene relieve its gloomy influence. Though strong men, and many of them in the prime of life, premature age and decay seem to have settled down upon them. Their lustreless eyes and leaden lips tell of ague, and their sad, thoughtful faces

bespeak those who are often called upon to meet peril, and who are destined to lives of emergency and hazard.

It was in the low and miserable hut we speak of, just as night set in of a raw November, that four of these raftsmen sat at their smoky fire, in company with two travellers on foot, whose humble means compelled them to await the arrival of some one rich enough to hire the raft. Meanly clad and wayworn were the strangers who now sat endeavouring to dry their dripping clothes at the blaze, and conversing in a low tone together. If the elder, dressed in a russet-coloured blouse and a broad-leafed hat, his face almost hid in beard and moustaches, seemed by his short and almost grotesque figure a travelling showman, the appearance of the younger, despite all the poverty of his dress, implied a very different class.

He was tall and well knit, with a loose

activity in all his gestures, which almost invariably characterises the Englishman; and though his dark hair and his bronzed cheek gave him something of a foreign look, there was a calm, cold self-possession in his air that denoted the Anglo-Saxon. He sat smoking his cigar, his head resting on one hand, and evidently listening with attention to the words of his companion. The conversation that passed will save us the trouble of introducing them to our reader, if he have not already guessed them.

"If we don't wait," said the elder, "till somebody richer and better off than ourselves comes, we'll have to pay seven francs for passin' in such a night as this."

"It is a downright robbery to ask so much," cried the other, angrily. "What so great danger is there? Or what so great hardship, after all?"

"There is both one and the other, I believe," replied he, in a tone evidently meant

to moderate his passion; "and just look at the poor craytures that has to do it. They're as weak as a bit of wet paper; they haven't strength to make themselves heard when they talk out there beside the river."

"That fellow yonder," said the youth, "has got good brawny arms and sinewy legs of his own."

"Ay, and he is starved after all. A cut of rye bread and an onion won't keep the heart up, nor a jug of red vinegar, though ye call it grape-juice. On my conscience, I'm thinkin' that the only people that preserves their strength upon nothin' is the Irish. I used to carry the bags over Slieb-na-boregan mountain and the Turk's Causeway, on wet potatoes and buttermilk, and never a day late for eleven years."

"What a life!" cried the youth, in an accent of utter pity.

"Faix, it was an elegant life—that is, when the weather was anyways good. With

a bright sun shinin' and a fine fresh breeze blowin' the white clouds away over the Atlantic, my road was a right cheery one, and I went along inventin' stories, sometimes fairy tales, sometimes makin' rhymes to myself, but always happy and contented. There wasn't a bit of the way I hadn't a name for in my own mind, either some place I read about, or some scene in a story of my own; but better than all, there was a dog—a poor starved lurcher he was—with a bit of the tail cut off; he used to meet me, as regular as the clock, on the side of Currah-na-geelah, and come beside me down to the ford every day in the year. No temptation nor flattery would bring him a step farther. I spent three-quarters of an hour once tryin' it, but to no good; he took leave of me on the bank of the river, and went away back with his head down; as if he was grievin' over something. Wasn't that mighty curious?"

"Perhaps, like ourselves, Billy, he wasn't quite sure of his passport," said the other, dryly.

"Faix, may be so," replied he, with perfect seriousness. "My notion was that he was a kind of an outlaw, a chap that maybe bit a child of the family, or ate a lamb of a flock given to him to guard; but indeed his general appearance and behaviour wasn't like that; he had good manners, and starved as he was, he never snapped the bread out of my fingers, but took it gently, though his eyes was dartin' out of his head with eagerness all the while."

"A great test of good breeding, truly," said the youth, sadly. "It must be more than a mere varnish when it stands the hard rubs of life in this wise."

"'Tis the very notion occurred to myself. It was the dhrop of good blood in him made him what he was."

Stealthy and fleeting as was the look

and mowld the distinies of others—that's grand."

"And see what comes of it!" cried the youth, bitterly. "Mark the base and unworthy subserviency it leads to—see the race of sycophants it begets."

"I have you there, too," cried Billy, with all the exultation of a ready debater. "Them dirty varmint ye speak of is the very test of the truth I'm tellin' ye. 'Tis because they won't labour—because they won't work—that they are driven to acts of sycophancy and meanness. The spirit of industhry saves a man even the excuse of doin' anything low!"

"And how often, from your own lips, have I listened to praises at your poor, humble condition; rejoicings that your lot in life secured you against the cares of wealth and grandeur!"

"And you will again, plaze God! if *I* live, and *you* presarve your hearin'. What

would I be if I was rich, but an ould—an ould voluptuary?" said Billy, with great emphasis on a word he had some trouble in discovering. "Atin' myself sick with delicacies, and drinkin' cordials all day long. How would I know the uses of wealth? Like all other vulgar creatures, I'd be buyin' with my money the respect that I ought to be buyin' with my qualities. It's the very same thing you see in a fair or a market—the country girls goin' about, hobbled and crippled with shoes on, that, if they had bare feet, could walk as straight as a rush. Poverty is not ungraceful itself. It's tryin' to be what isn't natural spoils people entirely."

"I think I hear voices without. Listen!" cried the youth.

"It's only the river,—it's risin' every minute."

"No, that was a shout. I heard it distinctly. Ay, the boatmen hear it now!"

"It is a travelling-carriage. I see the lamps," cried one of the men, as he stood at the door and looked landward. "They may as well keep the road—there's no crossing the Magra to-night!"

By this time the postilions' whips commenced that chorus of cracking by which they are accustomed to announce all arrivals of importance.

"Tell them to go back, Beppo," said the chief of the raftsmen to one of his party. "If we might try to cross with the mail-bags in a boat, there's not one of us would attempt the passage on the raft."

To judge from the increased noise and uproar, the traveller's impatience had now reached its highest point; but to this a slight lull succeeded, probably occasioned by the parley with the boatman.

"They'll give us five Napoleons for the job," said Beppo, entering, and addressing his chief.

"Per Dio, that won't support our families if we leave them fatherless," muttered the other. "Who and what are they that can't wait till morning?"

"Who knows?" said Beppo, with a genuine shrug of the native indifference. "Princes, belike!"

"Princes or beggars, we all have lives to save!" mumbled out an old man, as he re-seated himself by the fire. Meanwhile the courier had entered the hut, and was in earnest negotiation with the chief, who, however, showed no disposition to run the hazard of the attempt.

"Are you all cowards alike?" said the courier, in all the insolence of his privileged order; "or is it a young fellow of *your* stamp that shrinks from the risk of a wet jacket?"

This speech was addressed to the youth, whom he had mistaken for one of the rafts-men.

"Keep your coarse speeches for those who will bear them, my good fellow," said the other, boldly, "or mayhap the first wet jacket here will be one with gold lace on the collar."

"He's not one of us; he's a traveller," quickly interposed the chief, who saw that an angry scene was brewing. "He's only waiting to cross the river," muttered he, in a whisper, "when some one comes rich enough to hire the raft."

"Sacrebleu! Then he sha'n't come with us! that I'll promise him," said the courier, whose offended dignity roused all his ire. "Now, once for all, my men, will you earn a dozen Napoleons or not? Here they are for you, if you land us safely at the other side; and never were you so well paid in your lives for an hour's labour."

The sight of the gold, as it glistened temptingly in his outstretched hand, appealed to their hearts far more eloquently

than all his words, and they gathered in a group together to hold counsel.

"And you—are you also a distinguished stranger?" said the courier, addressing Billy, who sat warming his hands by the embers of the fire.

"Look you, my man," cried the youth, "all the gold in your master's leathern bag there can give you no claim to insult those who have offered you no offence. It is enough that you know that we do not belong to the raft to suffer us to escape your notice."

"Sacristi!" exclaimed the courier, in a tone of insolent mockery, "I have travelled the road long enough to learn that one does not need an introduction before addressing a vagabond."

"Vagabond!" cried the youth, furiously; and he sprang at the other with the bound of a tiger. The courier quickly parried the blow aimed at him, and, closely grappled,

they both now reeled out of the hut, in terrible conflict. With that terror of the knife that figures in all Italian quarrels, the boatmen did not dare to interfere, but looked on, as, wrestling with all their might, the combatants struggled, each endeavouring to push the other towards the stream. Billy, too, restrained by force, could not come to the rescue, and could only by words, screamed out in all the wildness of his agony, encourage his companion. "Drop on your knee—catch him by the legs—throw him back—back into the stream. That's it—that's it! Good luck to ye," shouted he, madly, as he fought like a lion with those about him. Slipping in the slimy soil, they had both now come to their knees; and after a struggle of some minutes' duration, rolled, clasped in each other's fierce embrace, down the slope, into the river. A plash, and a cry half smothered, were heard, and all was over.

While some threw themselves on the frantic creature, whose agony now overtopped his reason, and who fought to get free with the furious rage of despair, others, seizing lanterns and torches, hurried along the bank of the torrent to try and rescue the combatants. A sudden winding of the river at the place gave little hope to the search, and it was all but certain that the current must already have swept them down far beyond any chance of succour. Assisted by the servants of the traveller, who speedily were apprised of the disaster, the search was continued for hours, and morning at length began to break over the dreary scene without one ray of hope. By the grey cold dawn, the yellow flood could be seen for a considerable distance and the banks, too, over which a gauzy mist was hanging; but not a living thing was there! The wild torrent swept along his murky course with a deep monotonous roar. Trunks of trees and

leafy branches rose and sank in the wavy flood, but nothing suggested the vaguest hope that either had escaped. The traveller's carriage returned to Spezzia, and Billy, now bereft of reason, was conveyed to the same place, fast tied with cords, to restrain him from a violence that threatened his own life and that of any near him.

In the evening of that day a peasant's car arrived at Spezzia, conveying the almost lifeless courier, who had been found on the river's bank, near the mouth of the Magra. How he had reached the spot, or what had become of his antagonist, he knew not. Indeed, the fever which soon set in placed him beyond the limit of all questioning, and his incoherent cries and ravings only betrayed the terrible agonies his mind must have passed through.

If this tragic incident, heightened by the actual presence of two of the actors—one

all but dead, the other dying—engaged the entire interest and sympathy of the little town, the authorities were actively employed in investigating the event, and ascertaining, so far as they could, to which side the chief blame inclined.

The raftsmen had all been arrested, and were examined carefully, one by one; and now it only remained to obtain from the traveller himself whatever information he could contribute to throw light on the affair.

His passport, showing that he was an English peer, obtained for him all the deference and respect foreign officials are accustomed to render to that title, and the Prefect announced that if it suited his convenience, he would wait on his lordship at his hotel to receive his deposition.

"I have nothing to depose—no information to give," was the dry and not over-courteous response; but as the visit, it was

intimated, was indispensable, he named his hour to admit him.

The bland and polite tone of the Prefect was met by a manner of cold but well-bred ease, which seemed to imply that the traveller only regarded the incident in the light of an unpleasant interruption to his journey, but in which he took no other interest. Even the hints thrown out that he ought to consider himself aggrieved and his dignity insulted, produced no effect upon him.

"It was my intention to have halted a few days at Massa, and I could have obtained another courier in the interval," was the cool commentary he bestowed on the incident.

"But your lordship would surely desire investigation. A man is missing; a great crime may have been committed——"

"Excuse my interrupting; but as I am not, nor can be supposed to be, the criminal—

nor do I feel myself the victim—while I have not a claim to the character of witness, you would only harass me with interrogatories I could not answer, and excite me to take interest, or at least bestow attention on what cannot concern me."

"Yet there are circumstances in this case which give it the character of a preconcerted plan," said the Prefect, thoughtfully.

"Perhaps so," said the other, in a tone of utter indifference.

"Certainly, the companion of the man who is missing, and of whom no clue can be discovered, is reported to have uttered your name repeatedly in his ravings."

"My name—how so?" cried the stranger, hurriedly.

"Yes, my lord, the name of your passport —Lord Glencore. Two of those I have placed to watch beside his bed have repeated

the same story, and told how he has never ceased to mutter the name to himself in his wanderings."

"Is this a mere fancy?" said the stranger, over whose sickly features a flush now mantled. "Can I see him?"

"Of course. He is in the hospital, and too ill to be removed; but if you will visit him there I will accompany you."

It was only when a call was made upon Lord Glencore for some bodily exertion, that his extreme debility became apparent. Seated at ease in a chair, his manner seemed merely that of natural coldness and apathy; he spoke as one who would not suffer his nature to be ruffled by any avoidable annoyance; but now, as he arose from his seat, and endeavoured to walk, one side betrayed unmistakable signs of palsy, and his general frame exhibited the last stage of weakness.

"You see, sir, that the exertion costs its price," said he, with a sad, sickly smile. "I

am the wreck of what once was a man noted for his strength."

The other muttered some words of comfort and compassion, and they descended the stairs together.

"I do not know this man," said Lord Glencore, as he gazed on the flushed and fevered face of the sick man, whose ill-trimmed and shaggy beard gave additional wildness to his look; "I have never, to my knowledge, seen him before."

The accents of the speaker appeared to have suddenly struck some chord in the sufferer's intelligence, for he struggled for an instant, and then raising himself on his elbow, stared fixedly at him. "Not know me?" cried he, in English; "'tis because sorrow and sickness has changed me then."

"Who are you? Tell me your name?" said Glencore, eagerly.

"I'm Billy Traynor, my lord, the one you remember, the doctor——"

"And my boy," screamed Glencore, wildly.

The sick man threw up both his arms in the air, and fell backward with a cry of despair; while Glencore, tottering for an instant, sank with a low groan, and fell senseless on the ground.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FRAGMENT OF A LETTER.

Long before Lord Glencore had begun to rally from an attack which had revived all the symptoms of his former illness, Billy Traynor had perfectly recovered, and was assiduously occupied in attending him. Almost the first tidings which Glencore could comprehend assured him that the boy was safe, and living at Massa under the protection of the Chevalier Stubber, and waiting eagerly for Billy to join him. A brief extract from one of the youth's letters to his warm-hearted follower will suffice to show how he himself regarded the incident

which befel, and the fortune that lay before him.

* * * * *

"It was a long swim, of a dark night, too, Master Billy; and whenever the arm of a tree would jostle me, as it floated past, I felt as though that 'blessed' Courier was again upon me, and turned to give fight at once. If it were not that the river took a sudden bend as it nears the sea, I must infallibly have been carried out; but I found myself quite suddenly in slack water, and very soon after it shallowed so much that I could walk ashore. The thought of what became of my adversary weighed more heavily on me when I touched land; indeed, while my own chances of escape were few, I took his fate easily enough. With all its dangers, it was a glorious time, as hurrying downward in the torrent, through the dark night, the thunder growling overhead, the breakers battering away on the bar, I was the only living

thing there to confront that peril! What an emblem of my own fate in everything—a headlong course—an unknown ending—darkness—utter and dayless darkness—around me, and not one single soul to say, 'Courage!' There is something splendidly exciting in the notion of having felt thoughts that others have never felt—of having set footsteps in that untracked sand where no traveller has ever ventured. This impression never left me as I buffeted the murky waves, and struck out boldly through the surfy stream. Nay, more, it will never leave me while I live. I have now proved myself to my own heart! I have been, and for a considerable time, too, face to face with death. I have regarded my fate as certain, and yet have I not quailed in spirit, or flinched in coolness? No, Billy; I reviewed every step of my strange and wayward life. I bethought me of my childhood, with all its ambitious longings, and my boyish days

as sorrow first broke upon me, and I felt that there was a fitness in this darksome and mysterious ending to a life that touched on no other existence. For am I not as much alone in the great world as when I swam there in the yellow flood of the Magra?

"As the booming breakers of the sea met my ear, and I saw that I was nearing the wide ocean, I felt as might a soldier when charging an enemy's battery at speed. I was wildly mad with impatience to get forward, and shouted till my voice rang out above the din around me. How the mad cheer echoed in my own heart! It was the trumpet-call of victory.

"Was it reaction from all this excitement —the depression that follows past danger— that made me feel low and miserable afterwards? I know I walked along towards Lavenza in listlessness, and when a gendarme stopped to question me, and asked for my passport, I had not even energy to tell him

how I came there! Even the intense desire to see that spot once more—to walk that garden and sit upon that terrace—all had left me: it was as though the waves had drowned the spirit and left the limbs to move unguided. He led me beside the walls of the villa, by the little wicket itself, and still I felt no touch of feeling, no memory came back on me; I was indifferent to all! and yet *you* know how many a weary mile I have come just to see them once more! to revisit a spot where the only day-dream of my life lingered, and where I gave way to the promptings of a hope that have not often warmed this sad heart.

"What a sluggish swamp has this nature of mine become, when it needs a hurricane of passion to stir it! Here I am, living, breathing, walking, and sleeping; but without one sentiment that attaches me to existence; and yet do I feel as though whatever endangered life, or jeopardied fame, would

call me up to an effort and make me of some value to myself.

"I went yesterday to see my old studio: sorry things were those strivings of mine—false endeavours to realise conceptions that must have some other interpreter than marble. Forms are but weak appeals—words are coarse ones; music alone, my dear friend, is the true voice of the heart's meanings.

"How a little melody that a peasant girl was singing last night touched me. It was one that *she* used to warble, humming as we walked, like some stray waif thrown up by memory on the waste of life.

"So then, at last, I feel I am not a sculptor; still as little, with all your teaching, am I a scholar. The world of active life offers to me none of its seductions; I only recognise what there is in it of vulgar contention and low rivalry. I cannot be any of the hundred things by which men eke out subsistence, and yet I long for the inde-

pendence of being the arbiter of my own daily life. What is to become of me?—say, dearest, best of friends—say but the word, and let me try to obey you. What of our old plans of 'savagery?' The fascinations of civilised habits have made no stronger hold upon me since we relinquished that grand idea! Neither you nor I assuredly have any places assigned us at the feast of this old-world life—none have bidden us to it, nor have we even the fitting garments to grace it!

"There are moments, however—one of them is on me while I write—wherein I should like to storm that strong citadel of social exclusion, and test its strength. Who are they who garrison it? Are they better, and wiser, and purer than their fellows? Are they lifted by the accidents of fortune above the casualties and infirmities of nature? and are they more gentle-minded, more kindly-hearted, and more forgiving than

others? This I should wish to know and learn for myself. Would they admit us, for the nonce, to see and judge them? let the Bastard and the Beggar sit down at their board, and make brotherhood with them? I trow not, Billy. They would hand us over to the police!

"And my friend the courier was not so far astray when he called us vagabonds!

"If I were free, I should, of course, be with you; but I am under a kind of mild bondage here, of which I don't clearly comprehend the meaning. The chief minister has taken me, in some fashion, under his protection, and I am given to understand that no ill is intended me, and, indeed, so far as treatment and moderate liberty are concerned, I have every reason to be satisfied. Still is there something deeply wounding in all this mysterious 'consideration.' It whispers to me of an interest in me on the part of those who are ashamed to avow it—of

kind feelings held in check by self-esteem. Good Heavens! what have *I* done, that this humiliation should be my portion? There is no need of any subtlety to teach me what I am, and what the world insists I must remain. There is no ambition I dare to strive for, no affection my heart may cherish, no honourable contest I may engage in, but that the utterance of one fatal word may not bar the gate against my entrance, and send me back in shame and confusion. Had I of myself incurred this penalty, there would be in me that stubborn sense of resistance that occurs to every one who counts the gain and loss of all his actions; but I have not done so! In the work of my own degradation I am blameless!

"I have just been told that a certain Princess de Sabloukoff is to arrive here this evening, and that I am to wait upon her immediately. Good Heavens! can she be ——. The thought has just struck me, and my

head is already wandering at the bare notion of it! How I pray that this may not be so; my own shame is enough and more than I can bear; but to witness that of ——! Can you tell me nothing of this? But even if you can, the tidings will come too late—I shall have already seen her.

"I am unable to write more now; my brain is burning, and my hand trembles, so that I cannot trace the letters. Adieu till this evening.

"Midnight.

"I was all in error, dear friend. I have seen her; for the last two hours we have conversed together, and my suspicion had no foundation. She evidently knows all my history, and almost gives me to believe that one day or other I may stand free of this terrible shame that oppresses me. If this were possible, what vengeance would be enough to wreak on those who have thus practised on me? Can you imagine any

Vendetta that would pay off the heart-corroding misery that has made my youth like a sorrowful old age, dried up hope within me, made my ambition to be a snare, and my love a mere mockery? I could spend a life in the search after this revenge, and think it all too short to exhaust it!

"I have much to tell you of this Princess, but I doubt if I can remember it. Her manner meant so much and yet so little—there was such elegance of expression with such perfect ease—so much of the *finest* knowledge of life united to a kind of hopeful trust in mankind, that I kept eternally balancing in my mind whether her intelligence or her kindliness had the supremacy. She spoke to me much of the Harleys. Ida was well, and at Florence. She had refused Wahnsdorf's offer of marriage, and though ardently solicited to let time test her decision, persisted in her rejection.

"Whether she knew of my affection or

not, I cannot say; but I opine not, for she talked of Ida as one whose haughty nature would decline alliance with even an imperial house if they deemed it a condescension; so that the refusal of Wahnsdorf may have been on this ground. But how can it matter to *me?*

"I am to remain here a week, I think they said. Sir Horace Upton is coming on his way south, and wishes to see me; but you will be with me ere that time, and then we can plan our future together. As this web of intrigue, for so I cannot but feel it, draws more closely around me, I grow more and more impatient to break bounds and be away! It is evident enough that *my* destiny is to be the sport of some accident, lucky or unlucky, in the fate of others. Shall I await this?

"And they have given me money, and fine clothes, and a servant to wait upon me, and

treated me like one of condition. Is this but another act of the drama, the first scene of which was an old ruined castle in Ireland? They will fail signally if they think so; a heart can be broken only once! They may even feel sorry for what they have done, but I can never forgive them for what they have made me! Come to me, dear, kind friend, as soon as you can; you little know how far your presence reconciles me to the world and to myself!—Ever yours,

"C. M."

This letter Billy Traynor read over and over as he sat by Glencore's bedside. It was his companion in the long, dreary hours of the night, and he pondered over it as he sat in the darkened room at noonday.

"What is that you are crumpling up there? From whom is the letter?" said Lord Glencore, as Billy hurriedly endeavoured to

conceal the oft-perused epistle. "Nay," cried he, suddenly correcting himself, "you need not tell me; I asked without forethought." He paused a few seconds, and then went on: "I am now as much recovered as I ever hope to be, and you may leave me to-morrow. I know that both your wish and your duty call you elsewhere. Whatever future fortune may betide any of us, you at least have been a true and faithful friend, and shall never want! As I count upon your honesty to keep a pledge, I reckon on your delicacy not asking the reasons for it. You will, therefore, not speak of having been with me here. To mention me would be but to bring up bitter memories."

In the pause which now ensued, Billy Traynor's feelings underwent a sore trial; for while he bethought him that now or never had come the moment to reconcile the father and the son, thus mysteriously separated, his fears also whispered the danger

of any ill-advised step on his part, and the injury he might by possibility inflict on one he loved best on earth.

"You make me this pledge, therefore, before we part," said Lord Glencore, who continued to ruminate on what he had spoken. "It is less for *my* sake than that of another." Billy took the hand Glencore tendered towards him respectfully in his own, and kissed it twice.

"There are men who have no need of oaths to ratify their faith and trustfulness. You are one of them, Traynor," said Lord Glencore, affectionately.

Billy tried to speak, but his heart was too full, and he could not utter a word.

"A dying man's words have ever their solemn weight," said Glencore, "and mine beseech you not to desert one who has no prize in life equal to your friendship. Promise me nothing, but do not forget my prayer to you." And with this Lord Glencore

turned away, and buried his face between his hands.

"And in the name of Heaven," muttered Billy to himself, as he stole away, "what is it that keeps them apart, and won't let them love one another? Sure it wasn't in nature that a boy of his years could ever do what would separate them this way. What could he possibly say or do that his father mightn't forget and forgive by this time? And then if it wasn't the child's fault at all, where's the justice in makin' him pay for another's crime? Sure enough, great people must be unlike poor craytures like me, in their hearts and feelins as well as in their grandeur; and there must be things that *we* never mind nor think of, that are thought to be mortial injuries by *them*. Ay, and that is raysonable too! We see the same in the matayrial world. There's fevers that some never takes; and there's climates some can live in, and no others can bear!

"I suppose, now," said he, with a wise shake of the head, "pride—pride is at the root of it all, some way or other; and if it is, I may give up the investigation at onst, for divil a one o' me knows what pride is! barrin' it's the delight one feels in consthruin' a hard bit in a Greek chorus, or hittin' the manin' of a doubtful passage in ould Æschylus. But what's the good o' me puzzlin' myself? If I was to speculate for fifty years, I'd never be able to think like a lord, after all!" And with this conclusion he began to prepare for his journey.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW A SOVEREIGN TREATS WITH HIS MINISTER.

"WHAT can have brought them here, Stubber?" said the Duke of Massa, as he walked to and fro in his dressing-room, with an air of considerable perturbation. "Be assured of one thing, they have come for mischief! I know that Sabloukoff well. *She* it was separated Prince Max from my sister, and that Montenegro affair was all *her* doing also."

"I don't suspect——"

"Don't you. Well, then, *I* do, sir; and that's enough," said he, interrupting; "and as to Upton—he's well known throughout

Europe—a 'mauvais coucheur,' Stubber: that's what the Emperor Franz called him—a 'mauvais coucheur,' one of those fellows England employs to get up the embarrassments she so deeply deplores. Eh, Stubber, that's the phrase; 'while we deeply deplore the condition of the kingdom'—that's always the exordium to sending out a fleet or an impertinent despatch. But I'll not endure it here. I have my sovereign rights, my independence, my allies. By the way, haven't my allies taken possession of the Opera House for a barrack?"

"That they have, sir; and they threaten an encampment in the Court gardens."

"An open insult—an outrage! And have *you* endured and submitted to this?"

"I have refused the permission; but they may very possibly take no heed of my protest."

"And you'll tell me that I am the ruler of this State?"

"No, but I'll say you might, if you liked to be so."

"How so, Stubber? Come, my worthy fellow, what's your plan?—you have a plan, I'm certain—but I guess it: turn Protestant, hunt out the Jesuits, close the churches, demolish the monasteries, and send for an English frigate down to the Marina, where there's not water to float a fishing-boat. But no, sir, I'll have no such alliances; I'll throw myself upon the loyalty and attachment of my people, and—I'll raise the taxes. Eh, Stubber? We'll tax the 'colza' and the quarries! If they demur, we'll abdicate; that's my last word—abdicate."

"I wonder who this sick man can be that accompanies Upton," said Stubber, who never suffered himself to be moved by his master's violence.

"Another firebrand—another emissary of English disturbance. Hardenberg was perfectly right when he said the English nation

pays off the meanest subserviency to their own aristocracy, by hunting down all that is noble in every state of Europe. There, sir, he hit the mark in the very centre. Slaves at home, rebels abroad—that's your code!"

"We contrive to mix up a fair share of liberty with our bondage, sir."

"In your talk—only in your talk; and in the newspapers, Stubber. I have studied you closely and attentively. You submit to more social indignities than any nation ancient or modern. I was in London in '15, and I remember, at a race-course—Ascot, they called it—the Prince had a certain horse called Rufus."

"I rode him," said Stubber, dryly.

"*You* rode him?"

"Yes, sir. I was his jock for the King's Plate. There was a matter of twenty-eight started—the largest field ever known for the Cup—and Rufus reared, and, falling back, killed his rider; and the Duke of Dunrobin

sent for me, and told me to mount. That's the way I came to be there."

"Per Bacco! it was a splendid race, and I'm sure I never suspected when I cheered you coming in, that I was welcoming my future minister. Eh, Stubber, only fancy what a change!"

Stubber only shrugged his shoulders, as though the alteration in fortune was no such great prize after all.

"I won two thousand guineas on that day, Stubber. Lord Heddleworth paid me in gold, I remember; for they picked my pocket of three rouleaux on the course. The Prince laughed so at dinner about it, and said it was pure patriotism not to suffer exportation of bullion. A great people the English, that I must say! The display of wealth was the grandest spectacle I ever beheld; and such beauty, too! By the way, Stubber, our ballet here is detestable. Where did they gather together that gang of horrors?"

"What signifies it, sir, if the Austrian Jägers are bivouacked in the theatre?"

"Very true, by Jove!" said the Duke, pondering. "Can't we hit upon something —have you no happy suggestion? I have it, Stubber—an admirable thought. We'll have Upton to dinner. We'll make it appear that he has come here specially to treat with us. There is a great coldness just now between St. James's and Vienna. Upton will be charmed with the thought of an intrigue; so will be La Sabloukoff. We'll not invite the Field-Marshal Rosenkrantz: that will itself offend Austria. Eh, Stubber, isn't it good? Say to-morrow at six, and go yourself with the invitation."

And, overjoyed with the notion of his own subtlety, the Prince walked up and down, laughing heartily, and rubbing his hands in glee.

Stubber, however, was too well versed in the changeability of his master's nature to

exhibit any rash promptitude in obeying him.

"You must manage to let the English papers speak of this, Stubber. The *Augsburg Gazette* will be sure to copy the paragraph, and what a sensation it will create at Vienna!"

"I am inclined to think Upton has come here about that young fellow we gave up to the Austrians last autumn, and for whom he desires to claim some compensation and an ample apology."

"Apology, of course, Stubber—humiliation to any extent. I'll send the Minister Landelli into exile—to the galleys if they insist, but I'll not pay a scudo—my royal word on it! But who says that such is the reason of his presence here?"

"I had a hint of it last night, and I received a polite note from Upton this morning, asking when he might have a few moments' conversation with me."

"Go to him, Stubber, with our invitation. Ask him if he likes shooting. Say I am going to Serravezza on Saturday; sound him if he desires to have the Red Cross of Massa; hint that I am an ardent admirer of his public career; and be sure to tell me something he has said or done, if he come to dinner."

"There is to be a dinner, then, sir?" asked Stubber, with the air of one partly struggling with a conviction.

"I have said so, Chevalier!" replied the Prince, haughtily, and in the tone of a man whose decisions were irrevocable. "I mean to dine in the state apartments, and to have a reception in the evening, just to show Rosenkrantz how cheaply we hold him. Eh, Stubber? It will half kill him to come with the general company!"

Stubber gave a faint sigh, as though fresh complications and more troubles would be the sole results of this brilliant tactic.

"If I were well served and faithfully obeyed, there is not a sovereign in Europe

who would boast a more independent position—protected by my bold people, environed by my native Apennines, and sustained by the proud consciousness — the proud consciousness—that I cannot injure a State which has not sixpence in the treasury! Eh, Stubber?" cried he, with a burst of merry laughter. "That's the grand feature of composure and dignity, to know you can't be worse! and this, we Italian princes can all indulge in. Look at the Pope himself, he is collecting the imposts a year in advance!"

"I hope that this country is more equitably administered," said Stubber.

"So do I, sir. Were I not impressed with the full conviction that the subjects of this realm were in the very fullest enjoyment of every liberty consistent with public tranquillity, protected in the maintenance of every privilege——By the way, talking of privileges, they mustn't play 'Trottolo' on the high roads; they sent one of those

cursed wheels flying between the legs of my horse yesterday, so that if I hadn't been an old cavalry soldier, I must have been thrown! I ordered the whole village to be fined three hundred scudi, one half of which to be sent to the shrine of our Lady of Loretta, who really, I believe, kept me in my saddle!"

"If the people had sufficient occupation, they'd not play 'Trottolo,'" said Stubber, sternly.

"And whose the fault if they have not, sir? How many months have I been entreating to have those terraced gardens finished towards the sea? I want that olive wood, too, all stubbed up, and the ground laid out in handsome parterres. How repeatedly have I asked for a bridge over that ornamental lake? and as to the island, there's not a magnolia planted in it yet. Public works, indeed; find me the money, Stubber, and I'll suggest the works! Then, there's that villa, the residence of those

English people, have we not made a purchase of it?"

"No, your Highness; we could not agree about the terms, and I have just heard that the stranger who is travelling with Upton is going to buy it."

"Stepping in between me and an object I have in view! And in my own Duchy, too! And you have the hardihood to tell me that you knew of and permitted this negotiation to go on?"

"There's nothing in the law to prevent it, sir!"

"The law! What impertinence to tell me of the law! Why, sir, it is I am the law—I am the head and fountain of all law here—without my sanction, what can presume to be legal?"

"I opine that the act which admits foreigners to possess property in the State was passed in the life of your Highness's father."

"I'll repeal it, then! It saps the nationality of a people; it is a blow aimed at the very heart of independent sovereignty. I may stand alone in all Europe on this point, but I will maintain it. And as to this stranger, let his passport be sent to him on the spot."

"He may possibly be an Englishman, your Highness; and remember that we have already a troublesome affair on our hands with that other youth, who in some way claims Upton's protection. Had we not better go more cautiously to work? I can see and speak with him."

"What a tyranny is this English interference? There is not a land, from Sweden to Sicily, where, on some assumed ground of humanity, your Government have not dared to impose their opinions! You presume to assert that all men must feel precisely like your dogged and hard-headed countrymen, and that what are deemed grievances

in your land should be thought so elsewhere. You write up a code for the whole world, built out of the materials of all your national prejudices, your insular conceit — ay, and out of the very exigencies of your bad climate; and then you say to us, blessed in the enjoyment of light hearts and God's sunshine, that we must think and feel as you do! I am not astonished that my nobles are discontented with the share you possess of my confidence; they must long have seen how little suited the maxims of your national policy are to the habits of a happier population!"

"The people are far better than their nobles—that I'm sure of," said Stubber, stoutly.

"You want to preach socialism to me, and hope to convert me to that splendid doctrine of communism we hear so much of. You are a dangerous fellow—a very dangerous fellow. It was precisely men of your

stamp sapped the monarchy in France, and with it all monarchy in Europe."

"If your Highness intends Proserpine to run at Bologna, she ought to be put in training at once," said Stubber, gravely; "and we might send up some of the weeds at the same time, and sell them off."

"Well thought of, Stubber; and there was something else in my head—what was it?"

"The suppression of the San Lorenzo convent, perhaps; it is all completed, and only waits your Highness to sign the deed."

"What sum does it give us, Stubber, eh?"

"About one hundred and eighty thousand scudi, sir, of which some twenty thousand go to the National Mortgage Fund."

"Not one crown of it—not a single bajocco, as I am a Christian knight and a true gentleman. I need it all, if it were twice as much. If we incur the anger of the Pope and the Sacred College,—if we risk the

thunders of the Vatican,—let us have the worldly consolation of a full purse."

"I advised the measure on wiser grounds, sir. It was not fair and just that a set of lazy friars should be leading lives of indolence and abundance in the midst of a hard-worked and ill-fed peasantry."

"Quite true; and on these wise grounds, as you call them, we have rooted them out. We only wish that the game were more plenty, for the sport amuses us vastly." And he clapped Stubber familiarly on the shoulder, and laughed heartily at his jest.

It was in this happy frame of mind that Stubber always liked to leave his master; and so, promising to attend to the different subjects discussed between them, he bowed and withdrew.

CHAPTER X.

SOCIAL DIPLOMACIES.

"WHAT an insufferable bore, dear Princess," sighed Sir Horace, as he opened the square-shaped envelope that contained his Royal Highness's invitation to dinner.

"I mean to be seriously indisposed," said Madame de Sabloukoff; "one gets nothing but chagrin in intercourse with petty Courts."

"Like provincial journals, they only reproduce what has appeared in the metropolitan papers, and give you old gossip for fresh intelligence."

"Or, worse again, ask you to take an in-

terest in their miserable 'localisms'—the microscopic contentions of insect life!"

"They have given us a sentry at the door, I perceive," said Sir Horace, with assumed indifference.

"A very proper attention!" remarked the lady, in a tone that more than half implied the compliment was one intended for herself.

"Have you seen the Chevalier Stubber yet?" asked Upton.

"No; he has been twice here, but I was dressing, or writing notes. And you?"

"I told him to come about two o'clock," sighed Sir Horace. "I rather like Stubber."

This was said in a tone of such condescension, that it sounded as though the utterer was confessing to an amicable weakness in his nature—"I rather like Stubber."

Though there was something meant to invite agreement in the tone, the Princess only accepted the speech with a slight motion of her eyebrows, and a look of half unwilling assent.

"I know he's not of *your* world, dear Princess, but he belongs to that Anglo-Saxon stock we are so prone to associate with all the ideas of rugged, unadorned virtue."

"Rugged and unadorned indeed!" echoed the lady.

"And yet never vulgar," rejoined Upton—"never affecting to be other than he is; and, stranger still, not self-opinionated and conceited."

"I own to you," said she, haughtily, "that the whole Court here puts me in mind of Hayti, with its Marquis of Orgeat and its Count Marmalade. These people, elevated from menial station to a mock nobility, only serve to throw ridicule upon themselves, and the order that they counterfeit. No socialist in Europe has done such service to the cause of democracy as the Prince of Massa!"

"Honesty is such a very rare quality in this world, that I am not surprised at his Highness prizing it under any garb. Now, Stubber is honest."

"He says so himself, I am told."

"Yes, he says so, and I believe him. He has been employed in situations of considerable trust, and always acquitted himself well. Such a man cannot have escaped temptations, and yet even his enemies do not accuse him of venality."

"Good Heavens! what more would he have than his legitimate spoils? He is a Minister of the Household, with an ample salary—a Master of the Horse—an Inspector of Woods and Forests—a something over Church-lands, and a Red Cross of Massa besides. I am quite 'made up' in his dignities, for they are all set forth on his visiting-card, with what purports to be a coat of arms at top." And, as she spoke, she held out the card in derision.

"That's silly, I must say," said Upton, smiling; "and yet, I suppose, that here in Massa it was requisite he should assert all his pretensions thus openly."

"Perhaps so," said she, dryly.

"And, after all," said Upton, who seemed rather bent on a system of mild tormenting—"after all, there is something amiable in the weakness of this display—it smacks of gratitude! It is like saying to the world, 'See what the munificence of my master has made me!'"

"What a delicate compliment, too, to his nobles, which proclaims that, for a station of trust and probity, the Prince must recruit from the kitchen and the stables. To *my* thinking, there is no such impertinent delusion as that popular one which asserts that we must seek for everything in its least likely place—take ministers out of counting-houses, and military commanders from shop-boards. For the treatment of weighty questions in peace or war, the gentleman element is the first essential."

"Just so long as the world thinks so, dear Princess, not an hour longer!"

The Princess arose, and walked the room in evident displeasure. She half suspected that his objections were only devices to irritate, and she determined not to prolong the discussion. The temptation to reply proved, however, too strong for her resolution, and she said,

"The world has thought so for some centuries; and when a passing shade of doubt has shaken the conviction, have not the people rushed from revolution into actual bondage, as though any despotism were better than the tyranny of their own passions?"

"I opine," said Upton, calmly, "that the 'prestige' of the gentleman consists in his belonging to an 'order.' Now, that is a privilege that cannot be enjoyed by a mere popular leader. It is like the contrast between a club and a public meeting."

"It is something that you confess these people have no 'prestige,'" said she, triumphantly. "Indeed, their presence in the

world of politics, to my thinking, is a mere symbol of change—an evidence that we are in some stage of transition."

"So we are, Madame; there is nothing more true. Every people of Europe have outgrown their governments, like young heirs risen to manhood, ordering household affairs to their will. The popular voice now swells above the whisper of cabinets. So long as each country limits itself to home questions, this spirit will attract but slight notice. Let the issue, however, become a great international one, and you will see the popular will declaring wars, cementing alliances, and signing peaces in a fashion to make statecraft tremble!"

"And you approve of this change, and welcome it?" asked she, derisively.

"I have never said so, Madame. I foresee the hurricane, that's all. Men like Stubber are to be seen almost everywhere throughout Europe. They are a kind of declaration that, for the government and guidance of

mankind, the possession of a good head and an honest heart is amply sufficient; that rulers neither need fourteen quarterings nor names coeval with the Roman Empire."

"You have given me but another reason to detest him," said the Princess, angrily. "I don't think I shall receive him to-day."

"But you want to speak with him about that villa; there is some formality to be gone through before a foreigner can own property here. I think you promised Glencore you would arrange the matter."

She made no reply, and he continued: "Poor fellow! a very short lease would suffice for his time; he is sinking rapidly. The conflict his mind wages between hope and doubt has hastened all the symptoms of his malady."

"In such a struggle a woman has more courage than a man."

"Say more boldness, Princess," said Upton, slyly.

"I repeat courage, sir. It is fear, and nothing but fear, that agitates him. He is afraid of the world's sneer; afraid of what society will think, and say, and write about him; afraid of the petty gossip of the millions he will never see or hear of. This cowardice it is that checks him in every aspiration to vindicate his wife's honour and his boy's birth."

"*Si cela se peut*," said Upton, with a very equivocal smile.

A look of haughty anger, with a flush of crimson on her cheek, was the only answer she made him.

"I mean that he is really not in a position to prove or disprove anything. He assumed certain 'levities'—I suppose the word will do—to mean more than levities; he construed indiscretions into grave faults, and faults into crimes. But that he did all this without sufficient reason, or that he now has abundant evidence that he was mis-

taken, I am unable to say, nor is it with broken faculties and a wandering intellect that he can be expected to review the past and deliver judgment on it."

"The whole moral of which is—what a luckless fate is that of a foreign wife united to an English husband!"

"There is much force in the remark," said Upton, calmly.

"To have her thoughts, and words, and actions submitted to the standard of a nation whose moral subtleties she could never comprehend; to be taught that a certain amount of gloom must be mixed up with life, just as bitters are taken for tonics; that ennui is the sure type of virtue, and low spirits the healthiest condition of the mind—these are her first lessons: no wonder if she find them hard ones.

"To be told that all the harmless familiarities she has seen from her childhood are

dangerous freedoms, all the innocent gaieties of the world about her are snares and pitfals, is to make existence little better than a penal servitude—this is lesson the second. While, to complete her education, she is instructed how to assume a censorial rigidity of manner that would shame a duenna, and a condemnatory tone that assumes to arraign all the criminals of society, and pass sentence on them. How amiable she may become in disposition, and how suitable as a companion by this training, *you*, sir, and your countrymen, are best able to pronounce."

"You rather exaggerate our demerits, my dear Princess," said Upton, smiling. "We really do *not* like to be so very odious as you would make us."

"You are excellent people, with whom no one can live, that's the whole of it," said she, with a saucy laugh. "If your friend, Lord Glencore, had been satisfied to stay at

home, and marry one of his own nation, he might have escaped a deal of unhappiness, and saved a most amiable creature much more sorrow than falls to the lot of the least fortunate of her own country. I conclude you have some influence over him?"

"As much, perhaps, as any one; but even that says little."

"Can you not use it, therefore, to make him repair a great wrong?"

"You had some plan, I think?" said he, hesitatingly.

"Yes; I have written to her to come down here. I have pretended that her presence is necessary to certain formalities about the sale of the villa. I mean that they should meet without apprising either of them. I have sent the boy out of the way to Pontremoli, to make me a copy of some frescoes there; till the success of my scheme be decided, I did not wish to make him a party to it."

"You don't know Glencore, at least as I know him."

"There is no reason that I should," broke she in. "What I would try is an experiment, every detail of which I would leave to chance. Were this a case where all the wrong were on one side, and all the forgiveness to come from the other, friendly aid and interposition might well be needed; but here is a complication which neither you, nor I, nor any one else can pretend to unravel. Let them meet, therefore, and let Fate—if that be the name for it—decide what all the prevention and planning in the world could never provide for."

"The very fact that their meeting has been plotted beforehand will suggest distrust."

"Their manner in meeting will be the best answer to that," said she, resolutely. "There will be no acting between them, depend upon't."

"He told me that he had destroyed the registry of their marriage, nor does he know where a single witness of the ceremony could be found."

"I don't want to know *how* he could make the *amende* till I know that he is ready to do it," said she, in the same calm tone.

"To have arranged a meeting with the boy had, perhaps, been better than this. Glencore has not avowed it, but I think I can detect misgivings for his treatment of the youth."

"This was my first thought, and I spoke to young Massy the evening before Lord Glencore arrived. I led him to tell me of his boyish days in Ireland and his home there; a stern resolution to master all emotion seemed to pervade whatever he said; and though, perhaps, the effort may have cost him much, his manner did not betray it. He told me that he was illegitimate,

that the secret was divulged to him by his own father, that he had never heard who his mother was, nor what rank in life she occupied. When I said that she was one in high station, that she was alive and well, and one of my own dearest friends, a sudden crimson covered his face, as quickly followed by a sickly pallor; and though he trembled in every limb, he never spoke a word. I endeavoured to excite in him some desire to learn more of her if not to see her, but in vain. The hard lesson he had taught himself enabled him to repress every semblance of feeling. It was only when at last driven to the very limits of my patience, I abruptly asked him, 'Have you no wish to see your mother?' that his coldness gave way, and, in a voice tremulous and thick, he said, 'My shame is enough for myself.' I was burning to say more, to put before him a contingency, the mere shadow of a possibility that his claim to birth and station

might one day or other be vindicated. I did not actually do so, but I must have let drop some chance word that betrayed my meaning, for he caught me up quickly, and said, 'It would come too late, if it came even to-day. I am that which I am by many a hard struggle—you'll never see me risk a disappointment in life by any encouragement I may give to hope.'

"I then adverted to his father, but he checked me at once, saying, 'When the ties that should be closest in life are stained with shame and dishonour, they are bonds of slavery, not of affection. My debt to Lord Glencore is the degradation I live in—none other. His heritage to me is the undying conflict in my heart between what I once thought I was, and what I now know I am. If we met, it would be to tell him so.' In a word, every feature of the father's proud unforgiveness is reproduced in the boy, and I dreaded the very possibility of their meet-

ing. If ever Lord Glencore avow his marriage and vindicate his wife's honour, his hardest task will be reconciliation with this boy."

"All, and more than all, the evils I anticipated have followed this insane vengeance," said Upton. "I begin to think that one ought to leave a golden bridge even to our revenge, Princess."

"Assuredly, wherever a woman is the victim," said she, smiling, "for you are so certain to have reasons for distrusting yourself."

Upton sat meditating for some time on the plan of the Princess; had it only originated with himself, it was exactly the kind of project he would have liked. He knew enough of life to be aware that one can do very little more than launch events upon the great ocean of destiny; that the pretension to guide and direct them is oftener a snare than anything else; that the contingencies and

accidents, the complications too, which beset every move in life, disconcert all one's pre-arrangements, so that it is rare indeed when we are able to pursue the same path towards any object by which we have set out.

As the scheme was, however, that of another, he now scrutinised it, and weighed every objection to its accomplishment, constantly returning to the same difficulty, as he said,

"You do not know Glencore."

"The man who has but one passion, one impulse in life, is rarely a difficult study," was the measured reply. "Lord Glencore's vengeance has worn itself out, exactly as all similar outbreaks of temper do, for want of opposition. There was nothing to feed, nothing to minister to it. He sees—I have taken care that he should see—that his bolt has not struck the mark; that her position is not the precarious thing he meant to make it, but a station as much protected and

fenced round by its own conventionalities as that of any, the proudest lady in society. For one that dares to impugn her, there are full fifty ready to condemn *him*; and all this has been done without reprisal or recrimination; no partisanship to arraign his moroseness and his cruelty—none of that 'coterie' defence which divides society into two sections. This, of course, has wounded his pride, but it has not stimulated his anger; but above all, it has imparted to her the advantage of a dignity of which his vengeance was intended to deprive her."

"You must be a sanguine and a hopeful spirit, Princess, if you deem that such elements will unite happily hereafter," said Upton, smiling.

"I really never carried my speculations so far," replied she. "It is in actual life as in that of the stage, quite sufficient to accompany the actors to the fall of the curtain."

"The Chevalier Stubber, Madame," said a servant, entering, "wishes to know if you will receive him?"

"Yes—no—yes. Tell him to come in," said she, rapidly, as she resumed her seat beside the fire.

CHAPTER XI.

ANTE-DINNER REFLECTIONS.

NOTWITHSTANDING the strongly expressed sentiments of the Princess with regard to the Chevalier Stubber, she received him with marked favour, and gave him her hand to kiss with evident cordiality. As for Upton, it was the triumph of his manner to deal with men separated widely from himself in station and abilities. He could throw such an air of good fellowship into the smallest attentions, impart such a glow of kindliness to the veriest common-places, that the very craftiest and shrewdest could never detect. As he leaned his arm, there-

fore, on Stubber's shoulder, and smiled benignly on him, you would have said it was the affectionate meeting with a long-absent brother. But there was something besides this; there was the expansive confidence accorded to a trusty colleague, and as he asked him about the Duchy, its taxation, its debt, its alliances and difficulties, you might mark in the attention he bestowed all the signs of one receiving very valuable information.

"You perceive, Princess," said he, at last, "Stubber quite agrees with the Duke of Cloudsley—these small states enjoy no real independence."

"Then why are they not absorbed into the larger nations about them?"

"They have their uses; they are like substances interposed between conflicting bodies which receive and diminish the shock of collisions. So that Prussia, when wanting to wound Austria, only pinches Baden; and

Austria, desirous of insulting Saxony, 'takes it out' on Sigmaringen."

"It's a pleasant destiny you assign them," said she, laughing.

"Stubber will tell you I'm not far wrong in my appreciation."

"I'm not for what they call 'mediatizing' them neither, my lady," said Stubber, who generally used the designation to imply his highest degree of respect. "That may all be very well for the interests of the great states and the balance of power, and all that sort of thing; but we ought also to bestow a thought upon the people of these small countries, especially on the inhabitants of their cities. What's to become of *them* when you withdraw their courts, and throw their little capitals into the position of provincial towns and even villages?"

"They will eke out a livelihood somehow, my dear Stubber. Be assured that they'll not starve. Masters of the Horse may have

to keep livery stables; chamberlains turn valets; ladies of the bedchamber descend to the arts of millinery; but, after all, the change will be but in name, and there will not be a whit more slavery in the new condition than in the old one."

"Well, I'm not so sure they'll take the same comfortable view of it that you do, Sir Horace," said Stubber; "nor can I see who can possibly want livery stables, or smart bonnets, or even a fine butler, when the resources of the Court are withdrawn, and the city left to its own devices."

"Stubber suspects," said Upton, "that the policy which prevails amongst our great landed proprietors against small holdings is that which at present influences the larger states of Europe against small kingdoms, and so far he is right. It is unquestionably the notion of our day that the influences of government require space for their exercise."

"If the happiness of the people was to be thought of, which of course it is not," said Stubber, "I'd say, leave them as they are."

"Ah, my dear Stubber, you are now drawing the question into the realm of the imaginary. What do any of us know about our happiness?"

"Enough to eat and drink, a comfortable roof over you, good clothes, nothing oppressive or unequal in the laws, these go for a good way, in the kind of thing I mean; and let me observe, sir, it is a great privilege little states like little people enjoy, that they need have no ambitions. They don't want to conquer anybody; they neither ask for the mouth of a river here, or an island there, and if only let alone they'll never disturb the peace of the world at large."

"My dear Stubber, you are quite a proficient at statecraft," said Upton, with the very least superciliousness in the accent.

"Well, I don't know, Sir Horace," said the other, modestly, "but as my master's means are about the double of what they were when I entered his service, and as the people pay about one-sixth less in taxes than they used to do, mayhap I might say that I have put the saddle on the right part of the back."

"Your foreign policy does not seem quite as unobjectionable as your home management. That was an ugly business about that boy you gave up to the Austrians."

"Well, there were mistakes on all sides. You yourself, Sir Horace, gave him a false passport; his real name turns out to be Massy; it made an impression on me, from a circumstance that happened when I was a young fellow, living as pad-groom with Prince Tottskoy. I went over on a lark one day to Capri, and was witness to a wedding there of a young Englishman called Massy."

"Were you then present at the ceremony?"

"Yes, sir, and what's stranger still, I have a voucher for it."

"A voucher for it. What do you mean?"

"It was this way, sir. There was a great supper for the country people and the servants, and I was there, and I suppose I took too much of that Capri wine; it was new and hot at the time, and I got into a row of some sort, and I beat the Deputato from some place or t'other, and got locked up for three days; and the priest, a very jolly fellow, gave me under his handwriting a voucher that I had been a witness of the marriage, and all the festivities afterwards, just to show my master how everything happened. But the Prince never asked me for any explanations, and only said, he 'hoped I had amused myself well;' and so I kept my voucher to myself, and I have it at this very hour."

Glencore well, and will deal with him more patiently."

"From the Chevalier Stubber, your Excellency," said a servant, presenting a sealed packet; and Sir Horace opened it at once. The envelope contained a small and shabby slip of paper, of which the writing appeared faint and indistinct. It was dated 18—, Church of San Lorenzo, Capri, and went to certify that Guglielmo Stubber had been present, on the morning of the 18th August, at the marriage of the Most Noble Signor Massy with the Princess de la Torre, having in quality as witness signed the registry thereof, and then went on to state the circumstance of his attendance at the supper, and the event which ensued. It bore the name of the writer at foot, Basilio Nardoni, Priest of the aforesaid Church and Village.

"Little is Glencore aware that such an evidence as this is in existence," said Upton.

"The conviction that he had his vengeance in his power led him into this insane project. He fancied there was not a flaw in that terrible indictment; and see, here is enough to open the door to truth, and undo every detail of all his plotting. How strange is it, that the events of life should so often concur to expose the dark schemes of men's hearts; proofs starting up in unthought-of places, as though to show how vain was mere subtlety in conflict with the inevitable law of Fate."

"This Basilio Nardoni is an acquaintance of mine," said the Princess, bent on pursuing another train of thought; "he was chaplain to the Cardinal Caraffa, and frequently brought me communications from his Eminence. He can be found, if wanted."

"It is unlikely—most unlikely—that we shall require him."

"If you mean that Lord Glencore will himself make all the amends he can for a

gross injury and a fraud, no more is necessary," said she, folding the paper, and placing it in her pocket-book; "but if anything short of this be intended, then there is no exposure too open, no publicity too wide, to be given to the most cruel wrong the world has ever heard of."

"Leave me to deal with Glencore. I think I am about the only one who can treat with him."

"And now for this dinner at Court, for I have changed my mind and mean to go," said the Princess. "It is full time to dress, I believe."

"It is almost six o'clock," said Upton, starting up. "We have quite forgotten ourselves."

CHAPTER XII.

CONFLICTING THOUGHTS.

THE Princess Sabloukoff found—not by any means an unfrequent experience in life—that the dinner, whose dulness she had dreaded, turned out a very pleasant affair. The Prince was unusually gracious. He was in good spirits, and put forth powers o agreeability which had been successful in one of less distinction than himself. He possessed eminently, what a great orator once panegyrised as a high conversational element, "great variety," and could without abruptness pass from subject to subject, with always what showed he had bestowed

thought upon the theme before him. Great people have few more enviable privileges than that they choose their own topics for conversation. Nothing disagreeable, nothing wearisome, nothing inopportune can be obtruded upon them. When they have no longer anything worth saying, they can change the subject or the company.

His Highness talked with Madame de Sabloukoff on questions of state as he might have talked with a Metternich; he even invited from her expressions of opinion that were almost counsels, sentiments that might pass for warnings. He ranged over the news of the day, relating occasionally some little anecdote, every actor in which was a celebrity; or now and then communicating some piece of valueless secrecy, told with all the mystery of a "great fact;" and then he discussed with Upton the condition of England, and deplored, as all Continental rulers do, the impending downfal of that kingdom,

from the growing force of our restless and daring democracy. He regretted much that Sir Horace was not still in office, but consoled himself by reflecting that the pleasure he enjoyed in his society had been in that case denied him. In fact, what with insinuated flatteries, little signs of confidence, and a most marked tone of cordiality, purposely meant to strike beholders, the Prince conducted the conversation right royally, and played "Highness" to perfection.

And these two crafty, keen-sighted people, did they not smile at the performance, and did they not, as they drove home at night, amuse themselves as they recounted the little traits of the great man's dupery? Not a bit of it. They were charmed with his gracious manner, and actually enchanted with his agreeability. Strong in their self-esteem, they could not be brought to suspect that any artifice could be practised on *them*, or that the mere trickery and tinsel of high

station could be imposed on them as true value. Nay, they even went further, and discovered that his Highness was really a very remarkable man, and one who received far less than the estimation due to him. His flightiness became versatility; his eccentricity was all originality; and ere they reached the hotel, they had endowed him with almost every moral and mental quality that can dignify manhood.

"It is really a magnificent turquoise," said the Princess, gazing with admiration at a ring the Prince had taken from his own finger to present to her.

"How absurd is that English jealousy about foreign decorations. I was obliged to decline the Red Cross of Massa which his Highness proposed to confer on me. A monarchy that wants to emulate a republic is simply ridiculous."

"You English are obliged to pay dear for your hypocrisies; and you ought, for you

really love them." And with this taunt the carriage stopped at the door of the inn.

As Upton passed up the stairs, the waiter handed him a note, which he hastily opened; it was from Glencore, and in these words:

"DEAR UPTON,—I can bear this suspense no longer; to remain here canvassing with myself all the doubts that beset me is a torture I cannot endure. I leave, therefore, at once for Florence. Once there—where I mean to see and hear for myself—I can decide what is to be the fate of the few days or weeks that yet remain to—Yours,

"GLENCORE."

"He is gone, then—his lordship has started?"

"Yes, your Excellency, he is by this time near Lucca, for he gave orders to have horses ready at all the stations."

"Read that, Madame," said Upton, as he

once more found himself alone with the Princess; "you will see that all your plans are disconcerted. He is off to Florence."

Madame de Sabloukoff read the note, and threw it carelessly on the table. "He wants to forgive himself, and only hesitates how to do so gracefully," said she, sneeringly.

"I think you are less than just to him," said Upton, mildly; "his is a noble nature, disfigured by one grand defect."

"Your national character, like your language, is so full of incongruities and contradictions, that I am not ashamed to own myself unequal to master it; but it strikes me that both one and the other usurp freedoms that are not permitted to others. At all events, I am rejoiced that he has gone. It is the most wearisome thing in life to negotiate with one too near you. Diplomacy of even the humblest kind requires distance."

"You agree with the duellist, I perceive," said he, laughing, "that twelve paces is a

more fatal distance than across a handkerchief—proximity begets tremor."

"You have guessed my meaning correctly," said she; "meanwhile, I must write to *her* not to come here. Shall I say that we will be in Florence in a day or two?"

"I was just thinking of those Serravezza springs," said Upton; "they contain a bichloride of potash, which Staub, in his treatise, says, 'is the element wanting in all nervous organisations.'"

"But remember the season—we are in mid-winter—the hotels are closed."

"The springs are running, Princess; 'the earth,' as Moschus says, 'is a mother that never ceases to nourish.' I do suspect I need a little nursing."

The Princess understood him thoroughly. She well knew that whenever the affairs of Europe followed an unbroken track, without anything eventful or interesting, Sir Horace fell back upon his maladies for matter of oc-

cupation. She had, however, now occasion for his advice and counsel, and by no means concurred in his plan of spending some days, if not weeks, in the dreary mountain solitudes of Serravezza. "You must certainly consult Zanetti before you venture on these waters," said she; "they are highly dangerous if taken without the greatest circumspection;" and she gave a catalogue of imaginary calamities which had befallen various illustrious and gifted individuals, to which Upton listened with profound attention.

"Very well," sighed he, as she finished. "It must be as you say. I'll see Zanetti, for I cannot afford to die just yet. That 'Greek question' will have no solution without me—no one has the key of it but myself. That Panslavic scheme, too, in the Principalities, attracts no notice but *mine;* and as to Spain, the policy I have devised for that country requires all the watchfulness I can bestow

on it. No, Princess"—here he gave a melancholy sigh—"we must not die at this moment. There are just four men in Europe—I doubt if she could get on with three."

"What proportion do you admit as to the other sex?" said she, laughing.

"I only know of *one*, Madame;" and he kissed her hand with gallantry. "And now for Florence, if you will."

It is by no means improbable that our readers have a right to an apology at our hands for the habit we have indulged of lingering along with the two individuals whose sayings and doings are not directly essential to our tale; but is not the story of every-day life our guarantee that incidents and people cross and re-cross the path we are going, attracting our attention, engaging our sympathy, enlisting our energies, even in our most anxious periods? Such is the world; and we cannot venture out of reality. Besides this, we are disposed to think that

the moral of a tale is often more effectively conveyed by the characters than by the catastrophe of a story. The strange discordant tones of the human heart, blending, with melody the purest, sounds of passionate meaning, are in themselves more powerful lessons than all the records of rewarded virtue and all the calendars of punished vice. The nature of a single man can be far more instructive than the history of every accident that befals him.

It is then with regret that we leave the Princess and Sir Horace to pursue their journey, alone. We confess a liking for their society, and would often as soon loiter in the by-paths that they follow, as journey in the more recognised high-road of our true story. Not having the conviction that our sympathy is shared by our readers, we again return to the fortunes of Glencore.

When Lord Glencore's carriage underwent the usual scrutiny exercised towards

travellers at the gate of Florence, and prying officials poked their lanterns in every quarter, in all the security of their "caste," two foot travellers were rudely pushed aside to await the time till the pretentious equipage passed on. They were foreigners; and their effects, which they carried in knapsacks, required examination.

"We have come a long way on foot to-day," said the younger, in a tone that indicated nothing of one asking a favour. "Can't we have this search made at once?"

"Whisht—whisht," whispered his companion, in English; "wait till the Prince moves on, and be polite with them all."

"I am seeking for nothing in the shape of compliment," said the other; "there is no reason why, because I am on foot, I must be detained for this man."

Again the other remonstrated, and suggested patience.

"What are you grumbling about, young

fellow?" cried one of the officers; "do you fancy yourself of the same consequence as Milordo? And see, he must wait his time here."

"We came a good way on foot to-day, sir," interposed the elder, eagerly, taking the reply on himself, "and we're tired and weary, and would be deeply obliged if you'd examine us as soon as you could."

"Stand aside and wait your turn," was the stern response.

"You almost deserve the fellow's insolence, Billy," said the youth; "a crown piece in his hand had been far more intelligible than your appeal to his pity." And he threw himself wearily down on a stone bench.

Aroused by the accent of his own language, Lord Glencore sat up in his carriage, and leaned out to catch sight of the speaker, but the shadow of the overhanging roof concealed him from view. "Can't you suffer

those two poor fellows to move on?" whispered his lordship, as he placed a piece of money in the officer's hand; "they look tired and jaded."

"There, thank his Excellency for his kindness to you, and go your way," muttered the officer to Billy, who, without well understanding the words, drew nigh the window; but the glass was already drawn up, the postilions were once more in their saddles, and away dashed the cumbrous carriage in all the noise and uproar that is deemed the proper tribute to rank.

The youth heard that they were free to proceed with a half-dogged indifference, and throwing his knapsack on his shoulders, moved away.

"I asked them if they knew of one of her name in the city, and they said 'No,'" said the elder.

"But they so easily mistake names—how did you call her?"

"I said 'Harley—la Signora Harley,'" rejoined the other; "and they were positive she was not here. They never heard of her."

"Well, we shall know soon," sighed the youth, heavily. "Is not this an inn, Billy?"

"Ay is it, but not one for our purpose—it's like a palace. They told me of the Leone d'Oro as a quiet place and a cheap."

"I don't care where or what it be; one day and night here will do all I want. And then for Genoa, Billy, and the sea, and the world beyond the sea," said the youth, with increasing animation. "You shall see what a different fellow I'll be when I throw behind me for ever the traditions of this dreary life here."

"I know well the good stuff that's in ye," said the other, affectionately.

"Ay, but you don't know that I have energy as well as pride," said the other.

"There's nothing beyond your reach if

you will only strive to get it," said he again, in the same voice.

"You're an arrant flatterer, old boy," cried the youth, throwing his arm around him; "but I would not have you otherwise for the world. There is a happiness even in the self-deception of your praise that I could not deny myself."

Thus chatting, they arrived at the humble door of the Leone d'Oro, where they installed themselves for the night. It was a house frequented by couriers and vetturini, and at the common table for this company they now took their places for supper. The Carnival was just drawing to its close, and all the gaieties of that merry season were going forward. Nothing was talked of but the brilliant festivities of the city, the splendid balls of the Court, and the magnificent receptions in the houses of the nobility.

"The Palazzo della Torre takes the lead of all," said one. "There were upwards of

three thousand masks there this evening, I'm told, and the gardens were just as full as the salons."

"She is rich enough to afford it well," cried another. "I counted twenty servants in white and gold liveries on the stairs alone."

"Were you there, then?" asked the youth, whom we may at once call by his name of Massy.

"Yes, sir; a mask and a domino, such as you see yonder, are passports everywhere for the next twenty-four hours; and though I'm only a courier, I have been chatting with duchesses, and exchanging smart sayings with countesses in almost every great house in Florence this evening. The Pergola Theatre, too, is open, and all the boxes crowded with visitors."

"You are a stranger, as I detect by your accent," said another, "and you ought to

have a look at a scene such as you'll never witness in your own land."

"What would come of such freedoms with us, Billy?" whispered Massy; "would our great lords tolerate, even for a few hours, the association with honest fellows of this stamp?"

"There would be danger in the attempt, anyhow," said Billy.

"What calumnies would be circulated—what slanderous tales would be sent abroad under cover of this secrecy. How many a coward-stab would be given in the shadow of that immunity. For one who would use the privilege for mere amusement, how many would turn it to account for private vengeance."

"Are you quite certain such accidents do not occur here?"

"That society tolerates the custom is the best answer to this. There may be, for

aught we know, many a cruel vengeance executed under favour of this secrecy. Many may cover their faces to unmask their hearts, but, after all, they continue to observe a habit which centuries back their forefathers followed; and the inference fairly is, that it is not baneful. For my own part, I am glad to have an opportunity of witnessing these Saturnalia, and to-morrow I'll buy a mask and a domino, Billy, and so shall you too. Why should we not have a day's fooling like the rest?"

Billy shook his head and laughed, and they soon afterwards parted for the night.

While young Massy slept soundly, not a dream disturbing the calmness of his rest, Lord Glencore passed the night in a state of feverish excitement. Led on by some strange, mysterious influence, which he could as little account for as resist, he had come back to the city where the fatal incident of his life had occurred. With what purpose

he could not tell. It was not, indeed, that he had no object in view. It was rather that he had so many and conflicting ones, that they marred and destroyed each other. No longer under the guidance of calm reason, his head wandered from the past to the present and the future, disturbed by passion and excited by injured self-love. At one moment, sentiments of sorrow and shame would take the ascendant; and at the next, a vindictive desire to follow out his vengeance and witness the ruin that he had accomplished. The unbroken, unrelieved pressure of one thought, for years and years of time, had at last undermined his reasoning powers, and every attempt at calm judgment or reflection was sure to be attended with some violent paroxysm of irrepressible rage.

There are men in whom the combative element is so strong that it usurps all their guidance, and when once they are enlisted in a contest, they cannot desist till the struggle

be decided for or against them. Such was Glencore. To discover that the terrible injury he had inflicted on his wife had not crushed her nor driven her with shame from the world, aroused once more all the vindictive passions of his nature. It was a defiance he could not withstand. Guilty or innocent, it mattered not; she had braved him—at least so he was told—and as such he had come to see her with his own eyes. If this was the thought which predominated in his mind, others there were that had their passing power over him—moments of tenderness, moments in which the long past came back again, full of softening memories; and then he would burst into tears and cry bitterly.

If he ventured to project any plan for reconciliation with her he had so cruelly wronged, he as suddenly bethought him that her spirit was not less high and haughty than his own. She had, so far as he could

learn, never quailed before his vengeance; how, then, might he suppose would she act in the presence of his avowed injustice? Was it not, besides, too late to repair the wrong? Even for his boy's sake, would it not be better if he inherited sufficient means to support an honourable life, unknown and unnoticed, than bequeath to him a name so associated with shame and sorrow?

"Who can tell," he would cry aloud, "what my harsh treatment may not have made him? what resentment may have taken root in his young heart? what distrust may have eaten into his nature? If I could but see him and talk with him as a stranger,—if I could be able to judge him apart from the influences that my own feelings would create,—even then—what would it avail me? I have so sullied and tarnished a proud name, that he could never bear it without reproach. 'Who is this Lord Glencore?' people would say. 'What is the

strange story of his birth? Has any one yet got at the truth? Was the father the cruel tyrant, or the mother the worthless creature we hear tell of? Is he even legitimate, and if so, why does he walk apart from his equals, and live without recognition by his order?' This is the noble heritage I am to leave him—this the proud position to which he is to succeed. And yet Upton says that the boy's rights are inalienable; that, think how I may, do what I will, the day on which I die he is the rightful Lord Glencore. His claim may lie dormant, the proofs may be buried, but that, in truth and fact, he will be, what all my subterfuge and all my falsehood cannot deny him. And then, if the day should come that he asserts his right—if, by some of those wonderful accidents that reveal the mysteries of the world, he should succeed to prove his claim, what a memory will he cherish of *me!* Will not every sorrow of his youth, every indignity of his manhood,

be associated with my name? Will he or can he ever forgive him who defamed the mother and despoiled the son?"

In the terrible conflict of such thoughts as these, he passed the night; intervals of violent grief or passion alone breaking the sad connexion of such reflections, till at length the worn-out faculties, incapable of further exercise, wandered away into incoherency, and he raved in all the wildness of insanity.

It was thus that Upton found him on his arrival.

CHAPTER XIII.

MAJOR SCARESBY'S VISIT.

Down the crowded thoroughfare of the Borgo d'Ognisanti the tide of Carnival mummers poured unceasingly. Hideous masks and gay dominoes, ludicrous impersonations and absurd satires on costume abounded, and the entire population seemed to have given themselves up to merriment, and were fooling it to the top o' their bent. Bands of music and chorus singers from the theatre filled the air with their loud strains, and carriages crowded with fantastic figures moved past, pelting the bystanders with mock sweetmeats, and covering them with

showers of flour. It was a season of universal licence, and, short of actual outrage, all was permitted for the time. Nor did the enjoyment of the scene seem to be confined to the poorer classes of the people, who thus for the nonce assumed equality with their richer neighbours; but all, even to the very highest, mixed in the wild excitement of the pageant, and took the rough treatment they met with in perfect good humour. Dukes and princes, white from head to foot with the snowy shower, went laughingly along, and grave dignitaries were fain to walk arm-in-arm with the most ludicrous monstrosities, whose gestures turned on them the laughter of all around. Occasionally—but, it must be owned, rarely—some philosopher of a sterner school might be seen passing hurriedly along, his severe features and contemptuous glances owning to little sympathy with the mummery about him; but even *he* had to compromise his proud disdain, and escape,

as best he might, from the indiscriminate justice of the crowd. To detect one of this stamp, to follow, and turn upon him the full tide of popular fury, seemed to be the greatest triumph of the scene. When such a victim presented himself, all joined in the pursuit: nuns embraced, devils environed him, angels perched on his shoulders, mock wild-boars rushed between his legs; his hat was decorated with feathers, his clothes inundated with showers of meal or flour; hackney-coachmen, dressed as ladies, fainted in his arms, and semi-naked bacchanals pressed drink to his lips. In a word, each contributed what he might of attention to the luckless individual, whose resistance—if he were so impolitic as to make any—only increased the zest of the persecution.

An instance of this kind had now attracted general attention, nor was the amusement diminished by the discovery that he was a foreigner, and an Englishman. Imperti-

nent allusions to his nation, absurd attempts at his language, ludicrous travesties of what were supposed to be his native customs, were showered on him, in company with a hailstorm of mock bonbons and lime-pellets; till, covered with powder, and outraged beyond all endurance, he fought his way into the entrance of the Hôtel d'Italie, followed by the cries and laughter of the populace.

"Cursed tomfoolery! Confounded asses!" cried he, as he found himself in a harbour of refuge. "What the devil fun can they discover in making each other dirtier than their daily habits bespeak them? I say," cried he, addressing a waiter, "is Sir Horace Upton staying here? Well, will you say Major Scaresby—be correct in the name—Major Scaresby requests to pay his respects."

"His Excellency will see you, sir," said the man, returning quickly with the reply.

From the end of a room, so darkened by closed shutters and curtains as to make all

approach difficult, a weak voice called out: "Ah, Scaresby, how d'ye do? I was just thinking to myself that I couldn't be in Florence since I had not seen you!"

"You are too good, too kind, Sir Horace, to say so," said the other, with a voice whose tones by no means corresponded with the words.

"Yes, Scaresby, everything in this good city is in a manner associated with your name. Its intrigues, its quarrels, its loves and jealousies, its mysteries, in fine, have had no such interpreter as yourself within the memory of man! What a pity there were no Scaresbys in the Cinque Cento! How sad there were none of your family here in the Medician period; what a picture might we then have had of a society fuller even than the present of moral delinquencies." There was a degree of pomposity in the manner he uttered this that served to conceal in a great measure its sarcasm.

"I am much flattered to learn that I have ever enlightened your Excellency on any subject," said the Major, drily.

"That you have, Scaresby. I was a mere dabbler in moral toxicology when I heard your first lecture, and, I assure you, I was struck by your knowledge. And how is the dear city doing?"

"It is masquerading to-day," said Scaresby, "and consequently, far more natural than at any other period of the whole year. Smeared faces and dirty finery—exactly its suitable wear!"

"Who are here, Major? Any one that one knows?"

"Old Millington is here."

"The Marquis?"

"Yes, he's here, fresh painted and lacquered; his eyes twinkling with a mock lustre that makes him look like an old po'-chaise with a pair of new lamps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Sir Horace, encouragingly.

"And then—there's Mabworth."

"Sir Paul Mabworth?"

"Ay, the same old bore as ever! He has got off one of Burke's speeches on the India Bill by heart, and says that he spoke it on the question of the grant for Maynooth. Oh, if poor Burke could only look up!"

"Look down! you ought to say, Scaresby; depend upon't he's not on the opposition benches still!"

"I hate the fellow," said Scaresby, whose ill temper was always augmented by any attempted smartness of those he conversed with. "He has taken Walmsley's cook away from him, and never gives any one a dinner."

"That is shameful—a perfect dog in the manger!"

"Worse; he's a dog without any manger! For he keeps his house on board-wages, and

there's literally nothing to eat! That poor thing, Strejowsky."

"Oh, Olga Strejowsky, do you mean? What of her?"

"Why — there's another husband just turned up. They thought he was killed in the Caucasus, but he was only passing a few years in Siberia; and so he has come back, and claims all the emeralds. You remember, of course, that famous necklace, and the great drops! They belonged once to the Empress Catherine, but Mabworth says that he took the concern with all its dependencies; he'll give up his bargain, but make no compromise."

"She's growing old, I fancy."

"She's younger than the Sabloukoff by five good years, and they tell me *she* plays Beauty to this hour."

Ah, Scaresby, had you known what words were these you have just uttered, or had you only seen the face of him who

heard them, you had rather bitten your tongue off than suffered it to fashion them!

"Brignolles danced with her, at that celebrated fête given by the Prince of Orleans something like eight-and-thirty years ago."

"And how is the dear Duke?" asked Upton, sharply.

"Just as you saw him at the Court of Louis XVIII.; he swaggers a little more as he gets more feeble about the legs, and he shows his teeth when he laughs, more decidedly since his last journey to Paris. Devilish clever fellows these modern dentists are! He wants to marry; I suppose you've heard it."

"Not a word of it. Who is the happy fair?"

"The Nina, as they call her now. She was one of the Della Torres, who married, or didn't marry, Glencore. Don't you re-

member him? He was Colonel of the Eleventh, and a devil of a martinet he was."

"I remember him," said Upton, dryly.

"Well, he ran off with one of those girls, and some say they were married at Capri; as if it signified what happened at Capri! She was a deuced good-looking girl at the time—a coquette, you know—and Glencore was one of those stiff English fellows, that think every man is making up to his wife; he drank besides."

"No, pardon me, there you are mistaken. I knew him intimately; Glencore was as temperate as myself."

"I have it from Lowther, who used to take him home at night; *he* said Glencore never went to bed sober! At all events, she hated him, and detested his miserly habits."

"Another mistake, my dear Major. Glencore was never what is called a rich man, but he was always a generous one!"

"I suppose you'll not deny that he used to thrash her? Ay, and with a horsewhip too!"

"Come, come, Scaresby, this is really too coarse for mere jesting."

"Jest? By Jove! it was very bitter earnest. She told Brignolles all about it. I'm not sure she didn't show him the marks."

"Take my word for it, Scaresby," said Upton, dropping his voice to a low but measured tone, "this is a base calumny, and the Duke of Brignolles no more circulated such a story than I did. He is a man of honour, and utterly incapable of it."

"I can only repeat that I believe it to be perfectly true!" said Scaresby, calmly. "Nobody here ever doubted the story."

"I cannot say what measure of charity accompanies your zeal for truth in this amiable society, Scaresby, but I can repeat my assertion that this must be a falsehood."

"You will find it very hard, nevertheless, to bring any one over to your opinion," retorted the unappeasable Major. "He was a fellow everybody hated; proud and supercilious to all, and treated his wife's relations —who were of far better blood than himself —as though they were 'canaille.'"

A loud crash, as if of something heavy having fallen, here interrupted their colloquy, and Upton sprang from his seat and hastened into the adjoining room. Close beside the door—so close that he almost fell over it in entering—lay the figure of Lord Glencore. In his efforts to reach the door he had fainted, and there he lay—a cold, clammy sweat covering his livid features, and his bloodless lips slightly parted.

It was almost an hour ere his consciousness returned; but when it did, and that he saw Upton alone at his bedside, he pressed his hand within his own, and said, "I

heard it all, Upton, every word! I tried to reach the room; I got out of bed—and was already at the door—when my brain reeled, and my heart grew faint. It may have been malady, it might be passion—I know not—but I saw no more. He is gone—is he not?" cried he, in a faint whisper.

"Yes, yes—an hour ago; but you will think nothing of what he said, when I tell you his name. It was Scaresby—Major Scaresby; one whose bad tongue is the one solitary claim by which he subsists in a society of slanderers!"

"And he is gone!" repeated the other, in a tone of deep despondency.

"Of course he is. I never saw him since; but be assured of what I have just told you, that his libels carry no reproach. He is a calumniator by temperament."

"I'd have shot him, if I could have opened the door," muttered Glencore between his

teeth; but Upton heard the words distinctly. "What am I to this man," cried he, aloud, "or he to me, that I am to be arraigned by him on charges of any kind, true or false? What accident of fortune makes him my judge? Tell me that, sir. Who has appealed to him for protection? Who has demanded to be righted at his hand?"

"Will you not hear me, Glencore, when I say that his slanders have no sting! In the circles wherein he mixes, it is the mere scandal that amuses; for its veracity, there is not one that cares! You, or I, or some one else, supply the name of an actor in a disreputable drama; the plot of which alone interests, not the performer."

"And am I to sit tamely down under this degradation?" exclaimed Glencore, passionately. "I have never subscribed to this dictation. There is little, indeed, of life left to me, but there is enough, perhaps, to vin-

dicate myself against men of this stamp. You shall take him a message from me; you shall tell him by what accident I overheard his discoveries."

"My dear Glencore, there are graver interests, far worthier cares, than any this man's name can enter into, which should now engage you."

"I say he shall have my provocation, and that within an hour!" cried Glencore, wildly.

"You would give this man and his words a consequence that neither have ever possessed," said Upton, in a mild and subdued tone. "Remember, Glencore, when I left with you this morning that paper of Stubber's, it was with a distinct understanding that other and wiser thoughts than those of vengeance were to occupy your attention. I never scrupled to place it in your hands; I never hesitated about confiding to you what in lawyer's phrase would be a proof

against you. When an act of justice was to be done, I would not stain it by the faintest shadow of coercion. I left you free, I leave you still free, from everything but the dictates of your own honour."

Glencore made no reply, but the conflict of his thoughts seemed to agitate him greatly.

"The man who has pursued a false path in life," said Upton, calmly, "has need of much courage to retrace his steps; but courage is not the quality you fail in, Glencore, so that I appeal to you with confidence."

"I have need of courage," muttered Glencore; "you say truly. What was it the doctor said this morning—aneurism?"

Upton moved his head with an inclination barely perceptible.

"What a Nemesis there is in nature," said Glencore, with a sickly attempt to smile, "that passion should beget malady!

I never knew, physically speaking, that I had a heart—till it was broken. So that," resumed he, in a more agreeable tone, "death may ensue at any moment—on the least excitement?"

"He warned you gravely on that point," said Upton, cautiously.

"How strange that I should have come through that trial of an hour ago. It was not that the struggle did not move me. I could have torn that fellow limb from limb, Upton, if I had but the strength! But see," cried he, feebly, "what a poor wretch I am; I cannot close these fingers!" and he held out a worn and clammy hand as he spoke. "Do with me as you will," said he, after a pause; "I ought to have followed your counsels long ago!"

Upton was too subtle an anatomist of human motives to venture by even the slightest word to disturb a train of thought

which any interference could only damage. As the other still continued to meditate, and, by his manner and look, in a calmer and more reflective spirit, the wily diplomatist moved noiselessly away, and left him alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MASK IN CARNIVAL TIME.

From the gorgeous halls of the Pitti Palace down to the humblest chamber in Camaldole, Florence was a scene of rejoicing. As night closed in, the crowds seemed only to increase, and the din and clamour to grow louder. It seemed as though festivity and joy had overflowed from the houses, filling the streets with merry-makers. In the clear cold air groups feasted, and sang, and danced, all mingling and intermixing with a freedom that showed how thoroughly the spirit of pleasure-seeking can annihilate the distinctions of class. The soiled and tattered

mummer leaned over the carriage-door and exchanged compliments with the masked duchess within. The titled noble of a dozen quarterings stopped to pledge a merry company who pressed him to drain a glass of Monte Pulciano with them. There was a perfect fellowship between those whom fortune had so widely separated, and the polished accents of high society were heard to blend with the quaint and racy expressions of the "people."

Theatres and palaces lay open, all lighted "*a giorno.*" The whole population of the city surged and swayed to and fro like a mighty sea in motion, making the air resound the while with a wild mixture of sounds, wherein music and laughter were blended. Amid the orgie, however, not an act, not a word of rudeness disturbed the general content. It was a season of universal joy, and none dared to destroy the spell of pleasure that presided.

Our task is not to follow the princely equipages as they rolled in unceasing tides within the marble courts, nor yet to track the strong flood that poured through the wide thoroughfares in all the wildest exuberance of their joy. Our business is with two travellers, who, well weary of being for hours a-foot, and partly sated with pleasure, sat down to rest themselves on a bench beside the Arno.

"It is glorious fooling, that must be owned, Billy," said Charles Massy, "and the spirit is most contagious. How little have you or I in common with these people. We scarce can catch the accents of the droll allusions, we cannot follow the strains of their rude songs, and yet we are carried away like the rest to feel a wild enjoyment in all this din, and glitter, and movement. How well they do it too!"

"That's all by rayson of concentration," said Billy, gravely. "They are highly charged

with fun. The ould adage says, 'Non semper sunt Saturnalia'—It is not every day Morris kills a cow."

"Yet it is by this very habit of enjoyment that they know how to be happy."

"To be sure it is," cried Billy; "*they* have a ritual for it which *we* haven't; as Cicero tells us, 'In jucundis nullum periculum.' But ye see we have no notion of any amusement without a dash of danger through it, if not even cruelty!"

"The French know how to reconcile the two natures; they are brave and light-hearted too."

"And the Irish, Mister Charles—the Irish especially," said Billy, proudly; "for I was alludin' to the English in what I said last. The 'versatile ingenium' is all our own—

He goes into a tent and he spends half-a-crown,
Comes out, meets a friend, and for love knocks him down.

There's an elegant philosophy in that, now,

that a Saxon would never see! For it is out of the very fulness of the heart, ye may remark, that Pat does this, just as much as to say, 'I don't care for the expense!' He smashes a skull just as he would a whole dresser of crockeryware! There's something very grand in that recklessness."

The tone of the remark, and a certain wild energy of his manner, showed that poor Billy's faculties were slightly under the influences of the Tuscan grape, and the youth smiled at sight of an excess so rare.

"How hard it must be," said Massy, "to go back to the work-a-day routine of life after one of these outbursts—to resume not alonet he drudgery, but all the slavish observances that humble men yield to great ones."

"'Tis what Bacon says, 'There's nothing so hard as unlearnin' anything,' and the proof is how few of us ever do it! We always go on mixin' old thoughts with new

—puttin' different kinds of wine into the same glass, and then wonderin' we are not invigorated!"

"You're in a mood for moralising to-night, I see, Billy," said the other, smiling.

"The levities of life always puts me on that thrack, just as too bright a day reminds me to take out an umbrella with me."

"Yet I do not see that all your observation of the world has indisposed you to enjoy it, or that you take harsher views of life the closer you look at it."

"Quite the reverse; the more I see of mankind, the more I'm struck with the fact that the very wickedest and worst can't get rid of remorse! 'Tis something out of a man's nature entirely—something that dwells outside of him—sets him on to commit a crime; and then he begins to rayson and dispute with the temptation, just like one keepin' bad company, and listenin' to impure notions and evil suggestions day after

day; as he does this, he gets to have a taste for that kind of low society—I mane with his own bad thoughts—till at last every other ceases to amuse him. Look! what's that there—where are they goin' with all the torches there?" cried he, suddenly, springing up and pointing to a dense crowd that passed along the street. It was a band of music dressed in a quaint mediæval costume, on its way to serenade some palace.

"Let us follow and listen to them, Billy," said the youth. And they arose and joined the throng.

Following in the wake of the dense mass, they at last reached the gates of a great palace, and after some waiting gained access to the spacious court-yard. The grim old statues and armorial bearings shone in the glare of a hundred torches, and the deep echoes rang with the brazen voices of the band, as pent up within the quadrangle the din of a large orchestra arose. On a great

terrace overhead numerous figures were grouped—indistinctly seen from the light of the salons within—but whose mysterious movements completed the charm of a very interesting picture.

Some wrapped in shawls to shroud them from the night air, some less cautiously emerging from the rooms within, leaned over the marble balustrade and showed their jewelled arms in the dim hazy light, while around and about them gay uniforms and rich costumes abounded. As Billy gave himself up to the excitement of the music, young Massy, more interested by the aspect of the scene, gazed unceasingly at the balcony. There was just that shadowy indistinctness in the whole that invested it with a kind of romantic interest, and he could weave stories and incidents from those whose figures passed and repassed before him. He fancied that in their gestures he could trace many meanings, and as the bent-

down heads approached and their hands touched, he fashioned many a tale in his own mind of moving fortunes.

"And see, she comes again to that same dark angle of the terrace," muttered he to himself, as, shrouded in a large mantle and with a half mask on her features, a tall and graceful figure passed into the place he spoke of. "She looks like one among but not of them; how much of heart weariness is there in that attitude; how full is it of sad and tender melancholy—would that I could see her face! My life on't that it is beautiful! There, she is tearing up her bouquet; leaf by leaf the rose-leaves are falling, as though one by one hopes are decaying in her heart." He pushed his way through the dense throng till he gained a corner of the court where a few leaves and flower-stems yet strewed the ground; carefully gathering up these, he crushed them in his hand, and seemed to feel as though a

nearer tie bound him to the fair unknown. How little ministers to the hope—how infinitely less again will feed the imagination of a young heart!

Between them now there was, to his appreciation, some mysterious link. "Yes," said he to himself, "true, I stand unknown, unnoticed, yet it is to *me* of all the thousands here she could reveal what is passing in that heart! I know it, I feel it! She has a sorrow whose burden I might help to bear. There is cruelty, or treachery, or falsehood, arrayed against her; and through all the splendour of the scene—all the wild gaiety of the orgie—some spectral image never leaves her side! I would stake existence on it that I have read her aright!"

Of all the intoxications that can entrance the human faculties, there is none so maddening as that produced by giving full sway to an exuberant imagination. The bewilderment resists every effort of reason, and in

its onward course carries away its victims with all the force of a mountain torrent. A winding stair, long unused and partly dilapidated, led to the end of the terrace where she stood, and Massy, yielding to some strange impulse, slowly and noiselessly crept up this till he gained a spot only a few yards removed from her. The dark shadow of the building almost completely concealed his figure, and left him free to contemplate her unnoticed.

Some event of interest within had withdrawn all from the terrace save herself; the whole balcony was suddenly deserted, and she alone remained, to all seeming lost to the scene around her. It was then that she removed her mask, and suffering it to fall back on her neck, rested her head pensively on her hand. Massy bent over eagerly to try and catch sight of her face; the effort he made startled her, she looked round, and he

cried out, "Ida—Ida! My heart could not deceive me!" In another instant he had climbed the balcony and was beside her.

"I thought we had parted for ever, Sebastian," said she; "you told me so on the last night at Massa."

"And so I meant when I said it," cried he, "nor is our meeting now of my planning. I came to Florence, it is true, to see, but not to speak with you, ere I left Europe for ever. For three entire days I have searched the city to discover where you lived, and chance—I have no better name for it—chance has led me hither."

"It is an unkind fortune that has made us meet again," said she, in a voice of deep melancholy.

"I have never known fortune in any other mood," said he, fiercely. "When clouds show me the edge of their silver linings, I only prepare myself for storm and hurricane."

"I know you have endured much," said she, in a voice of deeper sadness.

"You know but little of what I have endured," rejoined he, sternly. "You saw me taunted, indeed, with my humble calling, insulted for my low birth, expelled ignominiously from a house where my presence had been sought for, and yet all these, grievous enough, are little to other evils I have had to bear."

"By what unhappy accident, what mischance, have you made *her* your enemy, Sebastian? She would not even suffer me to speak of you. She went so far as to tell me that there was a reason for the dislike—one which, if she could reveal, I would never question."

"How can I tell?" cried he, angrily. "I was born, I suppose, under an evil star, for nothing prospers with me."

"But can you even guess her reasons?" said she, eagerly.

"No, except it be the presumption of one in *my* condition daring to aspire to one in *yours;* and that, as the world goes, would be reason enough. It is probable, too, that I did not state these pretensions of mine over-delicately. I told her, with a frankness that was not quite acceptable, I was one who could not speak of birth or blood. She did not like the coarse word I applied to myself, and I will not repeat it; and she ventured to suggest that, had there not appeared some ambiguity in her own position, *I* could never have so far forgotten mine as to advance such pretensions——"

"Well, and then?" cried the girl, eagerly.

"Well, and then," said he, deliberately. "I told her I had heard rumours of the kind she alluded to, but to *me* they carried no significance; that it was for *you* I cared. The accidents of life around you had no influence on my choice; you might be all that the greatest wealth and highest blood

could make you, or as poor and ignoble as myself, without any change in my affections. 'These,' said she, 'are the insulting promptings of that English breeding which you say has mixed with your blood, and if for no other cause would make me distrust you.'

"'Stained as it may be,' said I, 'that same English blood is the best pride I possess.' She grew pale with passion as I said this, but never spoke a word; and there we stood, staring haughtily at each other, till she pointed to the door, and so I left her. And now, Ida, who is she that treats me thus disdainfully? I ask you not in anger, for I know too well how the world regards such as me to presume to question its harsh injustice. But tell me, I beseech you, that she is one to whose station these prejudices are the fitting accompaniments, and let me feel that it is less myself as the individual that she wrongs, than the class I belong to is that which she despises. I can better

bear this contumely when I know that it is an instinct."

"If birth and blood can justify a prejudice, a princess of the house of Della Torre might claim the privilege," said the girl, haughtily. "No family of the North, at least, will dispute with our own in lineage; but there are other causes which may warrant all that she feels towards you even more strongly, Sebastian. This boast of your English origin, this it is which has doubtless injured you in her esteem. Too much reason has she had to cherish the antipathy! Betrayed into a secret marriage by an Englishman, who represented himself as of a race noble as her own, she was deserted and abandoned by him afterwards. This is the terrible mystery which I never dared to tell you, and which led us to a life of seclusion at Massa. This is the source of that hatred towards all of a nation which she must ever associate with the greatest misfor-

tunes of her life! And from this unhappy event was she led to make me take that solemn oath that I spoke of, never to link my fortunes with one of that hated land."

"But you told me that you had not made the pledge," said he, wildly.

"Nor had I then, Sebastian; but since we last met, worked on by solicitation, I could not resist; tortured by a narrative of such sorrows as I never listened to before, I yielded and gave my promise."

"It matters little to *me!*" said he, gloomily; "a barrier the more or the less can be of slight moment when there rolls a wide sea between us! Had you ever loved me, such a pledge had been impossible."

"It was you yourself, Sebastian, told me we were never to meet again," rejoined she.

"Better that we had never done so!" muttered he. "Nay, perhaps I am wrong," added he, fiercely; "this meeting may serve

to mark how little there ever was between us!"

"Is this cruelty affected, Sebastian, or is it real?"

"It cannot be cruel to echo your own words. Besides," said he, with an air of mockery in the words, "she who lives in this gorgeous palace, surrounded with all the splendours of life, can have little complaint to make against the cruelty of fortune!"

"How unlike yourself is all this!" cried she. "You, of all I have ever seen or known, understood how to rise above the accidents of fate, placing your happiness and your ambitions in a sphere where mere questions of wealth never entered. What can have so changed you?"

Before he could reply, a sudden movement in the crowd beneath attracted the attention of both, and a number of persons

who had filled the terrace now passed hurriedly into the salons, where, to judge from the commotion, an event of some importance had occurred. Ida lost not a moment in entering, when she was met by the words —"It is she, Nina herself, is ill; some mask, a stranger, it would seem, has said something, or threatened something." In fact, she had been carried to her room in strong convulsions, and while some were in search of medical aid for her, others, not less eagerly, were endeavouring to detect the delinquent.

From the gay and brilliant picture of festivity which was presented but a few minutes back, what a change now came over the scene! Many hurried away at once, shocked at even a momentary shadow on the sunny road of their existence; others as anxiously pressed on to recount the incident elsewhere; some, again, moved by curiosity or some better prompting, exerted them-

selves to investigate what amounted to a gross violation of the etiquette of a carnival; and thus, in the salons, on the stairs, and in the court itself, the greatest bustle and confusion prevailed. At length some suggested that the gate of the palace should be closed, and none suffered to depart without unmasking. The motion was at once adopted, and a small knot of persons, the friends of the Countess, assumed the task of the scrutiny.

Despite complaints and remonstrances as to the inconvenience and delay thus occasioned, they examined every carriage as it passed out. None, however, but faces familiar to the Florentine world were to be met with; the well-known of every ball and fête were there, and if a stranger presented himself, he was sure to be one for whom some acquaintance could bear testimony.

At a fire in one of the smaller salons stood a small group, of which the Duc de Brignolles and Major Scaresby formed a

part. Sentiments of a very different order had detained these two individuals, and while the former was deeply moved by the insult offered to the Countess, the latter felt an intense desire to probe the circumstance to the bottom.

"Devilish odd it is!" cried Scaresby; "here we have been this last hour and a half turning a whole house out of the windows, and yet there's no one to tell us what it's all for, what it's all about!"

"Pardon, monsieur," said the Duke, severely. "We know that a lady whose hospitality we have been accepting has retired from her company insulted. It is very clearly our duty that this should not pass unpunished."

"Oughtn't we to have some clearer insight into what constituted the insult? It may have been a practical joke—a 'mauvaise plaisanterie,' Duke."

"We have no claim to any confidence

not extended to us, sir," said the Frenchman. "To me it is quite sufficient that the Countess feels aggrieved."

"Not but we shall cut an absurd figure to-morrow, when we own that we don't know what we were so indignant about."

"Only so many of us as have characters for the 'latest intelligence.'"

To this sally there succeeded a somewhat awkward pause, Scaresby occupying himself with thoughts of some perfectly safe vengeance.

"I shouldn't wonder if it was that Count Marsano—that fellow who used to be about the Nina long ago—come back again. He was at Como this summer, and made many inquiries after his old love!"

A most insulting stare of defiance was the only reply the old Duke could make to what he would have been delighted to resent as a personal affront.

"Marsano is a 'mauvais drôle,'" said a

Russian; "and if a woman slighted him, or he suspected that she did, he's the very man to execute a vengeance of the kind."

"I should apply a harsher epithet to a man capable of such conduct," said the Duke.

"He'd not take it patiently, Duke," said the other.

"It is precisely in that hope, sir, that I should employ it," said the Duke.

Again was the conversation assuming a critical turn, and again an interval of ominous silence succeeded.

"There is but one carriage now in the court, your Excellency," said a servant, addressing the Duke in a low voice, "and the gentleman inside appears to be seriously ill. It might be better, perhaps, not to detain him."

"Of course not," said the Duke; "but stay, I will go down myself."

There were still a considerable number of

persons on foot in the court when the Duke descended, but only one equipage remained —a hired carriage—at the open door of which a servant was standing, holding a glass of water for his master.

"Can I be of any use to your master?" said the Duke, approaching. "Is he ill?"

"I fear he has burst a blood-vessel, sir," said the man. "He is too weak to answer me."

"Who is it—what's his name?"

"I am not able to tell you, sir; I only accompanied him from the hotel."

"Let us have a doctor at once; he appears to be dying," said the Duke, as he placed his fingers on the sick man's wrist. "Let some one go for a physician."

"There is one here," cried a voice. "I'm a doctor;" and Billy Traynor pushed his way to the spot. "Come, Master Charles, get into the coach and help me to lift him out."

Young Massy obeyed, and not without difficulty they succeeded at last in disengaging the almost lifeless form of a man whose dark domino was perfectly saturated with fresh blood; his half mask still covered his face, and, to screen his features from the vulgar gaze of the crowd, they suffered it to remain there.

Up the wide stairs and into a spacious salon they now carried the figure, whose drooping head and hanging limbs gave little signs of life. They placed him on a sofa, and Traynor, with a ready hand, untied the mask and removed it. "Merciful Heavens," cried he, "it's my lord himself!"

The youth bent down, gazed for a few seconds at the corpse-like face, and fell fainting to the floor.

"My Lord Glencore himself!" said the Duke, who was himself an old and attached friend.

"Hush—not a word," whispered Traynor; "he's rallyin'—he's comin' to; don't utter a syllable."

Slowly and languidly the dying man raised his eyelids, and gazed at each of those around him. From their faces he turned his gaze to the chamber, viewing the walls and the ceiling, all in turn; and then, in an accent barely audible, he said, "Where am I?"

"Amongst friends, who love and will cherish you, dear Glencore," said the Duke, affectionately.

"Ah, Brignolles—I remember you: and this—who is this?"

"Traynor, my lord—Billy Traynor, that will never leave you while he can serve you?"

"Whose tears are those upon my hand—I feel them hot and burning," said the sick man; and Billy stepped back, that the

light should fall upon the figure that knelt beside him.

"Don't cry, poor fellow," said Glencore; "it must be a hard world, or you have many better and dearer friends than I could have ever been to you. Who is this?"

Billy tried, but could not answer.

"Tell him, if you know who it is: see how wild and excited it has made him," cried the Duke; for, stretching out both hands, Glencore had caught the boy's face on either side, and continued to gaze on it, in wild eagerness. "It is—it is," cried he, pressing it to his bosom, and kissing the forehead over and over again.

"Whom does he fancy it? Whom does he suspect——?"

"This is—look, Brignolles," cried the dying man, in a voice already thick with a death-rattle—"this is the seventh Lord Viscount Glencore. I declare it. And now——" He fell back, and never spoke

more. A single shudder shook his feeble frame, and he was dead.

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We have had occasion once before in this veracious history to speak of the polite oblivion Florentine society so well understands to throw over the course of events which might cloud, even for a moment, the sunny surface of its enjoyment. No people, so far as we know, have greater gifts in this way —to shroud the disagreeables of life in decent shadow—to ignore or forget them is their grand prerogative.

Scarcely, therefore, had three weeks elapsed, than the terrible catastrophe at the Palazzo della Torre was totally consigned to the bygones; it ceased to be thought or spoken of, and was as much matter of remote history as an incident in the times of one of the Medici. Too much interested in the future to waste time on the past, they

launched into speculations as to whether the Countess would be likely to marry again; what change the late event might effect in the amount of her fortune, and how far her position in the world might be altered by the incident. He who, in the ordinary esteem of society, would have felt less acutely than his neighbours for Glencore's sad fate—Upton—was in reality deeply and sincerely affected. The traits which make a consummate man of the world—one whose prerogative it is to appreciate others, and be able to guide and influence their actions—are, in truth, very high and rare gifts, and imply resources of fine sentiment, as fully as stores of intellectual wealth. Upton sorrowed over Glencore as for one whose noble nature had been poisoned by an impetuous temper, and over whose best instincts an ungovernable self-esteem had ever held the mastery. They had been friends almost from boyhood, and the very worldliest of men can feel the bit-

terness of that isolation in which the "turn of life" too frequently commences. Such friendships are never made in later life. We lend our affections when young on very small security, and though it is true we are occasionally unfortunate, we do now and then make a safe investment. No men are more prone to attach an exaggerated value to early friendships than those who, stirred by strong ambitions, and animated by high resolves, have played for the great stakes in the world's lottery. Too much immersed in the cares and contests of life to find time to contract close personal attachments, they fall back upon the memory of school or college days to supply the want of their hearts. There is a sophistry, too, that seduces them to believe that then, at least, they were loved for what they were, for qualities of their nature, not for accidents of station, or the proud rewards of success. There is also another and a very strange element in the

pleasure such memories afford. Our early attachments serve as points of departure by which we measure the distance we have travelled in life. "Ay," say we, "we were schoolfellows; I remember how he took the lead of me in this or that science, how far behind he left me in such a thing, and yet look at us now!" Upton had very often to fall back upon similar recollections; neither his school nor his college life had been remarkable for distinction, but it was always perceived that every attainment he achieved was such as would be available in after life. Nor did he ever burden himself with the toils of scholarship, while there lay within his reach stores of knowledge that might serve to contest the higher and greater prizes that he had already set before his ambition.

But let us return to himself, as alone and sorrow-struck he sat in his room of the Hôtel d'Italie. Various cares and duties

consequent on Glencore's death had devolved entirely upon him. Young Massy had suddenly disappeared from Florence on the morning after the funeral, and was seen no more, and Upton was the only one who could discharge any of the necessary duties of such a moment. The very nature of the task thus imposed upon him had its own depressing influence on his mind—the gloomy pomp of death—the terrible companionship between affliction and worldliness—the tear of the mourner—the heart-broken sigh drowned in the sharp knock of the coffin-maker. He had gone through it all, and sat moodily pondering over the future, when Madame de Sabloukoff entered.

"She's much better this morning, and I think we can go over and dine with her to-day," said she, removing her shawl and taking a seat.

He gave a little easy smile that seemed assent, but did not speak.

"I perceive you have not opened your letters this morning," said she, turning towards the table, littered over with letters and despatches of every size and shape. "This seems to be from the King—is that his mode of writing 'G. R.' in the corner?"

"So it is," said Upton, faintly. "Will you be kind enough to read it for me?"

"'Pavilion, Brighton.

"'DEAR UPTON,—Let me be the first to congratulate you on an appointment which it affords me the greatest pleasure to confirm——'

"What does he allude to?" cried she, stopping suddenly, while a slight tinge of colour showed surprise, and a little displeasure, perhaps, mingled in her emotions.

"I have not the very remotest conception," said Upton, calmly. "Let us see what that large despatch contains? it comes

from the Duke of Agecombe. Oh," said he, with a great effort to appear as calm and unmoved as possible, "I see what it is, they have given me India!"

"India!" exclaimed she, in amazement.

"I mean, my dear Princess, they have given me the Governor-Generalship."

"Which, of course, you would not accept."

"Why not, pray?"

"India! It is banishment, barbarism, isolation from all that really interests or embellishes existence—a despotism that is wanting in the only element which gives a despot dignity, that he founds or strengthens a dynasty."

"No, no, charming Princess," said he, smiling; "it is a very glorious sovereignty, with unlimited resources, and—a very handsome stipend."

"Which, therefore, you do not decline," said she, with a very peculiar smile.

"With your companionship I should call it a paradise," said he.

"And without such ?"

"Such a sacrifice as one must never shrink from at the call of duty," said he, bowing profoundly.

The Princess dined that day with the Countess of Glencore, and Sir Horace Upton journeyed towards England.

CHAPTER XV.

THE END.

YEARS have gone over, and once more—it is for the last time—we come back to the old castle in the West, beside the estuary of the Killeries. Neglect and ruin have made heavy inroads on it. The battlements of the great tower have fallen. Of the windows, the stormy winds of the Atlantic have left only the stone mullions. The terrace is cumbered with loose stones and fallen masonry. Not a trace of the garden remains, save in the chance presence of some flowering plant or shrub, half-choked by weeds, and wearing out a sad existence in uncared-

for solitude. The entrance-gate is closely barred and fastened, but a low portal, in a side wing, lies open, entering by which we can view the dreary desolation within. The apartments once inhabited by Lord Glencore are all dismantled and empty. The wind and the rain sweep at will along the vaulted corridors and through the deep-arched chambers. Of the damp, discoloured walls and ceilings, large patches litter the floors, with fragments of stucco and carved architraves.

One small chamber, on the ground-floor, maintains a habitable aspect. Here a bed and a few articles of furniture, some kitchen utensils, and a little book-shelf, all neatly and orderly arranged, show that some one calls this a home! Sad and lonely enough is it! Not a sound to break the dreary stillness, save the deep roar of the heavy sea —not a living voice, save the wild shrill cry of the osprey, as he soars above the barren

cliffs! It is winter, and what desolation can be deeper or gloomier? The sea-sent mists wrap the mountains and even the lough itself in their vapoury shroud. The cold thin rain falls unceasingly; a cheerless, damp, and heavy atmosphere dwells even within doors; and the grey half light gives a shadowy indistinctness even to objects at hand, disposing the mind to sad and dreary imaginings.

In a deep straw chair, beside the turf fire, sits a very old man, with a large square volume upon his knee. Dwarfed by nature, and shrunk by years, there is something of almost goblin semblance in the bright lustre of his dark eyes, and the rapid motions of his lips as he reads to himself half aloud. The almost wild energy of his features has survived the wear and tear of time, and, old as he is, there is about him a dash of vigour that seems to defy age. Poor Billy Traynor is now upwards of eighty, but his faculties

are clear, his memory unclouded, and, like Moses, his eye not dimmed. The Three Chronicles of Loughdooner, in which he is reading, is the history of the Glencores, and contains, amongst its family records, many curious predictions and prophecies. The heirs of that ancient house were, from time immemorial, the sport of fortune, enduring vicissitudes without end. No reverses seemed ever too heavy to rally from—no depth of evil fate too deep for them to extricate themselves. Involved in difficulties innumerable, engaged in plots, conspiracies, luckless undertakings, abortive enterprises, still they contrived to survive all around them, and come out with, indeed, ruined fortunes and beggared estate, but still with life, and with what is the next to life itself, an unconquerable energy of character.

It was in the encouragement of these gifts that Billy now sought for what cheered the last declining years of his solitary life.

His lord, as he ever called him, had been for years and years away in a distant colony, living under another name. Dwelling amongst the rough settlers of a wild remote tract, a few brief lines at long intervals were the only tidings that assured Billy he was yet living; yet were they enough to convince him, coupled with the hereditary traits of his house, that some one day or other he would come back again to resume his proud place and the noble name of his ancestors. More than once had it been the fate of the Glencores to see "the hearth cold, and the roof-tree blackened;" and Billy now muttered the lines of an old chronicle where such a destiny was bewailed:

Where are the voices, whispering low,
Of lovers side by side?
And where the haughty dames who swept
Thy terraces in pride?
Where is the wild and joyous mirth
That drown'd th' Atlantic's roar,
Making the rafters ring again
With welcome to Glencore?

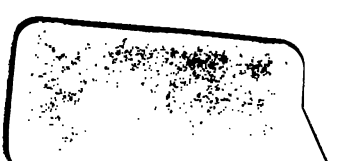
And where's the step of belted knight,
That strode the massive floor?
And where's the laugh of lady bright,
We used to hear of yore?
The hound that bayed, the prancing steed,
Impatient at the door,
May bide the time for many a year—
They'll never see Glencore!

"And he came back, after all — Lord Hugo—and was taken prisoner at Ormond by Cromwell, and sentenced to death!" said Billy—"sentenced to death!—but never shot! Nobody knew why, or ever will know. After years and years of exile he came back, and was at the Court of Charles, but never liked—they say dangerous! That's exactly the word—dangerous!"

He started up from his reverie, and, taking his stick, issued from the room. The mist was beginning to rise, and he took his way towards the shore of the lough, through the wet and tangled grass. It was a long and toilsome walk for one so old as he was, but he went manfully onward, and at last

reached the little jetty where the boats from the mainland were wont to put in. All was cheerless and leaden-hued over the wide waste of water; a surging swell swept heavily along, but not a sail was to be seen! Far across the lough he could descry the harbour of Leenane, were the boats were at anchor, and see the lazy smoke as it slowly rose in the thick atmosphere. Seated on a stone at the water's edge, Billy watched long and patiently, his eyes turning at times towards the bleak mountain-road, which for miles was visible. At last, with a weary sigh, he arose, and muttering, "He won't come to-day," turned back again to his lonely home.

To this hour he lives, and waits "the coming of Glencore."

THE END.

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